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The life of the Right Reverend Ernest Ro



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BISHOP ERNEST WILBERFORCE

A MEMOIR



Ernest R. Cicestr

THE LIFE
OF
THE RIGHT REVEREND
ERNEST ROLAND WILBERFORCE
FIRST BISHOP OF NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE
AND AFTERWARD
BISHOP OF CHICHESTER

BY
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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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the Bishop's work in the north : a similar service in the Chichester Diocese has been rendered me by the Rev. Canon A. M. Deane and the Rev. H. M. Hordern, Vicar of St. Nicholas, Brighton.

I desire also to thank the Right Rev. Edgar Jacob, Bishop of St. Albans ; the former and the present Bishops of Mashonaland, the Right Rev. H. T. Gaul and the Right Rev. F. H. Beaven ; the Ven. Archdeacon Kilner, Vicar of Gargrave in Craven ; the Rev. C. W. Wilson, Rector of Lapford, Devon ; the Rev. S. L. Ollard, Vice-Principal of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford ; Howard Fox, Esq. ; and Sir Ernest Tritton for their share in portraying some salient characteristics of Bishop Ernest Wilberforce, and for illuminating phases and episodes in his career.

The letter from Her late Majesty Queen Victoria, printed at p. 191, is published with the gracious permission of His Majesty King George V.

J. B. A.

THE PRECINCTS,
CANTERBURY,
Dec. 1911.

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LIFE

OF

BISHOP ERNEST WILBERFORCE

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS—1840–1873

Birth—Loss of his mother—Lavington—School days—Oxford—The river
—Marriage and ordination—Dr. Woodford—Middleton Stoney—
Death of his wife—Chaplain to his father—Death of Bishop Samuel
Wilberforce.

ERNEST ROLAND WILBERFORCE, fourth child and third son of Samuel Wilberforce and of Emily, daughter of the Rev. John Sargent,¹ was born on January 22, 1840, at Brighstone Rectory in the Isle of Wight. His famous father, the most conspicuous figure in the history of the English Episcopate since the death of Laud, was then already a man of mark, destined for high preferment, if not the highest; and a few weeks earlier he had been promoted by the Bishop of Winchester² to the archdeaconry of Surrey. In August of the same year he was collated to a canonry in Winchester

¹ For the connection between the families of Sargent and Wilberforce see *The Life of Bishop Wilberforce*, i: chap. i., and Purcell's *Life of Cardinal Manning*, i. p. 100.

² The Right Rev. J. B. Sumner.

Cathedral, and it was in the house attached to his stall in the Close of the ancient city that the overwhelming sorrow of his life befell him. There his wife died on March 10, 1841, shortly after the birth of their son Basil, and henceforward, till his latest hour, whether the world smiled or frowned, in sickness or in health, in the day of triumph and in the day of discouragement or failure, Samuel Wilberforce was a man stricken to the heart.

Never (writes his Biographer ¹) did the anniversary pass by without its being commemorated in his diary and referred to in letters to the more intimate among his friends; and his children will remember that in after years, in the midst of all the tide of business, the day was strictly kept. Always on returning to Lavington the first thing was to visit the churchyard and to lay flowers on her grave.

To the children, indeed, scarcely less than to the bereaved husband, the loss was immeasurable and irreparable. 'You know too indistinctly all you missed when God removed her from you,' wrote an old friend of his father's,² some forty years afterwards, to Ernest

¹ The late Canon Ashwell, *Life of Bishop Wilberforce*, i. 179.

² The late Archdeacon Philip Jacob, father of the present Bishop of St. Albans. The letter is dated March 8, 1879. 'To-morrow,' it begins, 'and especially the next day are memorable epochs in your family history. To-morrow evening, so to speak, I was one of a small congregation, unknown to your Mother, in your Mother's bedroom, and joined with her in her last communion. The sound of her voice is still in my ears, and I shall never forget those distinct and placid accents.'

I cannot resist quoting from the beautiful lines found among Bishop Samuel Wilberforce's papers after his death, and dated 'Lavington, February 10, 1849' (*Life*, i. 186):

I sat within my glad home, and round about me played
Four children in their merriment, and happy noises made;
Beside me sate their mother in her loveliness and light,
I ne'er saw any like her, save in some vision bright.

.

Wilberforce, then himself a Canon of Winchester and occupying the next house to that in which his mother died. ‘Her very mould was of a texture the like to which is not often found in the present fabrics as they are formed nowadays. Her face was more angelical than earthly, and she “was not, for God took her.”’ In what he called ‘the almost awful happiness’ of his own married life, as he watched his children playing round their mother or kneeling at her side, Ernest Wilberforce would give pathetic expression to his longing and regret. ‘Oh, how much better a man I should have been had *my* mother been spared!’ In some families it is granted to an elder sister to fill, however inadequately, the vacant place, but the Bishop’s only daughter left her father’s roof to be married¹ when Ernest was barely ten years old, and his boyhood was doubly bereft of the softening influences and gentle guidance which are

Then at our door One knocked, and we rose to let Him in,
For the night was wild and stormy, and to turn Him thence
were sin;

With a ‘Peace be to this household’ His shelterers He blest,
And sate Him down amongst us like some expected guest.

The children’s noise was hushed, the mother softly spoke,
And my inmost spirit thrilled with the thoughts which in me woke;
For it seemed like other days within my memory stored,
Like Mamre’s tented plain or Emmaus’ evening board.

‘I joined your hearts together, I blessed your marriage vow,
Then trust and be not fearful though My ways seem bitter now.’

We spake no word of answer, nor said He any more,
But as one about to leave us He passéd to the door;
Then ere He crossed the threshold He beckoned with His hand
That She who sat beside me should come at His command.

Then rose that wife and mother and went into the night;
She followed at His bidding and was hidden from our sight;
And though my heart was breaking I strove my will to bow,
For I saw His hands were piercéd, and thorns had torn His brow.

¹ To the late Henry Pye. See p. 17, *infra*.

the very essence of home. Samuel Wilberforce, indeed, was the fondest and most affectionate of parents, from whose thoughts, as his diaries show, his children were seldom absent. 'Oh, how tender he was over your childhood,' wrote Miss Drusilla Way,¹ long afterwards, to Ernest Wilberforce; 'it was more like a mother's love than a father's, and as if he could never look on you without the thought of what you had lost.' Samuel Wilberforce had a natural affinity for all that was young and buoyant, and the allegories and stories which he would relate to his little lads on Sunday evening show a rare appreciation of the mind of a child, and are as fresh to-day as when they were told in the Rectory at Brighstone or Alverstoke.² Very few, unfortunately, of his father's early letters to Ernest Wilberforce have been preserved, yet the moving chapter in his biography which is devoted to his eldest son, Herbert, the young sailor whose career was cut short by the hardships of the Crimea and the Baltic, is an abiding witness of the care and affection which the Bishop lavished on his boys.³ But the cloistered existence of a country clergyman was at an end even before his wife's death had shattered his home life. In May 1845 he was called to the Deanery of Westminster; in October of the same year to the see of Oxford; and so long as breath remained in his body he was immersed in public labours, weighed down by 'the care of all the churches,' and

¹ See *Life of Bishop Wilberforce*, vol. i. p. 5.

² The fifty-fifth edition of *Agathos and other Sunday Stories* is before me as I write. The original illustrations were from the pencil of Mrs. Wilberforce, and one of them, a child leaning against a stile, was suggested by her eldest son, Herbert, a boy of great physical beauty. When Ernest was a few weeks old his father wrote that 'the baby promises well, for my eyes are critical, to be like his eldest brother, and that is, I assure you, saying not a little.'

³ *Life of Bishop Wilberforce*, vol. ii. chap. viii. Herbert died at Torquay, on Feb. 25, 1856.

oppressed by multifarious activities which would have exhausted the strength of ten ordinary men. The subject of this memoir once told a diocesan gathering, half in jest, half in earnest, that he was becoming a stranger to his own wife and children, and the Bishop of Oxford was in no better case.

Ernest Wilberforce always declared that the days of his infancy were a complete blank to him. His grandmother, Mrs. Sargent, who had lost her husband some few years before, undertook the responsibility of bringing up the motherless children,¹ and the task was no sinecure. 'The most that I remember of dear Ernest's youth,' writes Mrs. Pye, 'is his intense love of mischief. He *always* took the lead, and his two brothers² did their best to follow his instructions.' On the death of his wife the Bishop had become the owner of Lavington, the family property of the Sargents, and there in the old house on the Sussex downs a considerable portion of the year was always spent by the children and their grandmother. Samuel Wilberforce took all the pride and pleasure of an Englishman in the possession of landed estate. It brought him into touch alike with the tillers of the soil and the country gentlemen. His love of the open air, of riding, and of natural history, tastes which he bequeathed to his sons in ample measure, found gratification on soil every yard of which was familiar to him from boyish days. There is a story that

¹ During the interval she had kept house for another widowed son-in-law, Henry Manning, who had succeeded to the Rectory of Lavington on the death of her husband in 1833, and who held the living till his secession in 1850. In a well-known passage the Cardinal has written of 'the little church under a green hillside where the morning and evening prayers and the music of the English bible for seventeen years became a part of my soul.'

² Reginald and Basil; Herbert entered the Navy in 1843, when Ernest was almost a baby in arms.

once, after complimenting, as he supposed, a well-beneficed clergyman on being a 'Squarson,' he noticed that the recipient of the pleasantries was by no means gratified; 'And I suppose I ought to call myself a "Squarshup,"' he continued by way of appeasement. Cuddesdon Palace, too, the 'policies' and amenities of which weighed so heavily on the simple soul of Bishop Stubbs, was a constant joy to him. Its remoteness from the railway, its inconvenience as a diocesan centre, were more than atoned for in his eyes by the out-of-door life which it rendered possible, and by the opportunities it afforded for ample hospitality and for a closer intimacy with guests and friends than any town residence could have permitted.

Both at Lavington and at Cuddesdon the Wilberforce boys were free of all the pleasures of the countryside, and there the future Bishop acquired that devotion to field sports, that passion for exercise, and that knowledge of the secrets of wood and river which never deserted him. In the Chichester days, which were then so far distant, he would steal an afternoon and ride over on his bicycle to spend a few hours with the Lavington keeper who had taught him to shoot, and who, to the last, always spoke of him as 'my boy.' In one of his last letters, dated August 4, 1907, he records that he had been over to see 'Old Smith,'¹ then approaching his ninetieth year.

Ernest was only nine years old when he was sent to Radley, then recently founded and very indifferently equipped and organised.² Thence he was transferred in 1851 to a private school at Twyford near Winchester

¹ *Infra*, p. 339.

² Radley College Register and the Rev. Thomas Mozley's *Oxford Reminiscences*, ii. p. 27.

kept by the Rev. J. C. Roberts ; of these early school-days not a memory or a tradition has survived ; and in 1854 he was placed by his father at Harrow, then at the height of its reputation under Dr. Vaughan. A letter written by him to Mrs. Sargent early in his first ' half ' is the earliest trace of his handwriting which has been preserved, and we can reconstruct from it the care and anxiety with which the good old lady must have regarded the plunge into the troubled waters of public-school life.

MY DEAREST GRANIT,—I will write and answer your long letter. I do sit in Chapel (for we do not go to Church) where I can hear, I do sit near Fellows who behave well, our food here is very good, we have 4 meals a day here, but we are not obliged to go to any except dinner, if we do not like, and as soon as we have done we may get up and go without waiting for anyone else. I should like my other 4 shirts very much if they could be sent. I remain your affectionate grandson.

Another letter, undated, but obviously written two or three years later, at an age when it is difficult for the average boy to lay bare his heart or find expression for solemn thoughts, shows that in the Wilberforce family there was no constraint in the correspondence between father and son.

MY DEAREST PAPA, . . . How long do you stay in London ? and have you done your confirmations yet ? I hope you have, dearest Papa, as I am sure you work too hard. . . . Next Sunday is our communion Sunday. I am sure, dear Papa, I need not ask you to join your prayers with mine for God to give me strength and grace, and I hope that with God's grace it will strengthen me against my temptations. Dearest Papa, my beloved brother's death¹ still seems more like a dream than

¹ *Supra*, p. 4.

reality. We were so accustomed to have him come home for a short time and then return to sea, that sometimes it seems as if he had only gone on board ship again, Oh, may we by God's grace follow him when we die! I remain, dearest Papa, your very affectionate Son.

Though he was in the headmaster's house, Ernest's memories of Harrow were not happy. A public-school education, as we are beginning to discover, does not necessarily extract the best from all its votaries. The Wilberforce temperament was not peculiarly responsive to restraint or convention, and he left in 1857 without acquiring distinction either in study or in games. He was too young for the university, and the next two years were spent at Colchester with a private tutor, the Rev. Lewis Welch Owen, who won his pupil's abiding gratitude by initiating him in vacation time into the mysteries of sea-fishing on the south Devon coast, and who was afterwards to be closely associated with him in diocesan work at Winchester. On May 6, 1859, he matriculated at Exeter College, and he went into residence in the following October, his college tutor being the late Dr. Ince. The family traditions were strongly identified with Oriel, but Provost Hawkins was a very masterful personage of the old cut-and-dried school, and the Bishop of Oxford could not have entertained much affection for the man who had driven his brother Robert from college office.¹ Exeter was a famous rowing college, and had been head of the river in 1857 and 1858. In 1859 her colours had been lowered by Balliol, but the boat

¹ See Mozley's *Reminiscences*, chap. xxxvi. The fact that the Rev. William Sewell, his neighbour at Radley, was a fellow of Exeter may have influenced the Bishop's choice.

remained second in the following year, finishing third in 1861. Among the Exeter freshmen of the October term of 1859 was Walter Marsham Hoare,¹ who was destined to stroke the winning crew in the University Boatrace of 1861-2-3; and Ernest Wilberforce, also, was a recruit of no mean promise in the eyes of the rowing set. The tall, erect figure, the long arms, and the straight back were matched by an indomitable spirit which would die rather than acknowledge defeat. 'My brother,' so the Archdeacon of Westminster has told me, 'was the most powerful man I have ever known,' and his muscular feats are still a tradition among the fast dwindling group of his early friends. That well-known Oxford doctor, the late Frederick Symonds, used to declare that his arm was the most perfectly developed specimen it had ever been his lot to examine. He rowed 'seven' in the Exeter Torpid of 1860 which finished head of the river, and he occupied number three thwart in the college eight in that and the two following years. In 1860 he also rowed 'two' in the trial eight stroked by W. B. Woodgate, now the Nestor of the University Boat Club. If it had not been for a strain to his back, he was in a fair way to gaining what is now known as his 'blue.' Long years afterwards, at a Chichester Diocesan Conference, an aquatic metaphor used by Prebendary Salmon, the Rector of Barcombe, led the Bishop to recall the days when he looked on the mighty back of the speaker, his tutor in oarsmanship, rowing in front of him in the Exeter boat.² 'Who

¹ Now the Rector of Colkirk with Oxwick, in the diocese of Norwich.

² Prebendary Salmon had been stroke when his college was 'head' in 1858. It is recorded of him that during the whole of his long career on the river no boat in which he rowed was ever subjected to a bump. One of Ernest Wilberforce's first actions at Chichester was to offer him a prebendal stall.

was the man who ran on the bank,' he added, in allusion to the somewhat heated discussion in which they were engaged, 'and called out "easy all"? Was he not the Bishop of the Diocese?'

Training was sterner, if less scientific, than in more modern times, and the discipline which it imposed was as healthy for the spirit as for the flesh. But there was an exuberance of vitality in Ernest Wilberforce which nothing could repress. The word 'ragging' was not then invented, but he was an unconscious exponent of the art. The legend was current in my own Oxford days of a group of undergraduates carefully posed in the Exeter quadrangle for the purposes of a college photograph when a lump of coal, dexterously aimed from Wilberforce's window, sent the camera into space and deprived the representative of Messrs. Hills and Saunders of his wonted flow of speech. Ernest was a member of the 'Adelphi,' one of the best known of the Oxford wine clubs, and on 'going down' he left behind him a set of handsome decanters as a parting gift. He was rather maliciously reminded of this fact years afterwards by his old scout, then the butler of the club, who professed a tender interest in their safe custody. 'Smash them, Hollis, smash them!' said the Bishop of Newcastle. But in the social life of the college he was handicapped by the reserve and reticence which were then so marked a feature of his character, and which never entirely forsook him. His friendships were confined almost exclusively to the members of the boating fraternity, and with them he participated in more than one stirring adventure. Those were the days when the noble art of self-defence was a regular part of a University education, and when town and gown rows of the class immortalised by Tom Hughes

and Cuthbert Bede had not yet become mythical. Ernest Wilberforce was a born fighter to whom the fierce joy of battle appealed for its own sake, and whose tremendous strength made him the rallying-point in many a hard-fought fray. During his Lancashire days there was an outbreak of Protestant zeal at Liverpool which took the form of rather serious rioting. The young incumbent of Seaforth was heard to express a hope that the local Orangemen would not be so misguided as to bring their violence in his direction. 'I am fourteen stone weight,' he said drily, 'and I can use my fists.'

I shall never forget (relates his brother Reginald¹) how in one of these 'rows' he, Hoare, Hammersley, Edwardes and I walked down the 'High' until we (that is Ernest) thought we had attracted a sufficient number of the rough element. Then Ernest gave the signal to retreat, which we did until we got to the railings of the Bodleian; there we stood and the fight began. In quite a short time Ernest had a rampart of the fallen in front of him over which he could just hit; suddenly Ridding, afterwards Bishop of Southwell, who was Senior Proctor, appeared on the scene, and I shall never forget Ernest thanking him for his timely arrival and saying that he and his friends had been defending themselves and were nearly exhausted. The Proctor promptly ordered them all into college.

Forty years later, when addressing a great meeting of working-men at the Brighton Church Congress, Ernest Wilberforce, in one of his rare moments of personal reminiscence, referred to the invaluable experience in self-control which he had acquired from 'the gloves.'

¹ Mr. Reginald Wilberforce, who had served with his regiment, the 52nd, through the hottest days of the Indian Mutiny, must then have been home on furlough.

When some one speaks a hard word to you, or writes some abominable thing about you in a newspaper, what do you do? Let me tell you one thing. When I was a young man at the University I learned boxing from a very skilled prize-fighter. Of course, at first he could do what he liked with me with his fists, and I remember when I got a very hard blow just in the middle of my face I hit out savagely. He put down his hands, took me aside, and taught me what I have never forgotten. He said, 'Mr. Wilberforce, whenever you get a blow, don't hit out wildly, but take a step back, and just keep your hands up, and ask yourself "What was I doing wrong, and why did I get that blow?"' Will you apply that lesson to life? I have taught it over and over again to young men, and more than one has learned to thank me for it.

An undergraduate who devoted himself to the river could find little opportunity, in term time at any rate, for riding, which, in the days before organised athleticism, was the recognised pastime of the youth of Oxford. But Ernest Wilberforce, like his father, was never happier than in the saddle, and he was a fearless horseman, equally unsparing of himself and of his steed. His brother Basil, in what he has described to me as 'his unregenerate days,' kept a pack of harriers at Cuddesdon, and 'Mr. Ernest's' exploits on horses of dubious stamina but unquestionable viciousness were the terror of the old family retainer¹ who acted as whipper-in. The coverts at Lavington and the fields round Cuddesdon gave excellent sport with pheasant and partridge and ground game; here the brothers and their Oxford friends could revel to their hearts' content, and the young men, gun on shoulder and dog at heel,

¹ Old William Parker, afterwards for many years verger at St. Paul's Cathedral.

with not unfrequently a pipe, or its equivalent, in their mouths, must have been a strange contrast to the grave and distinguished company which the Bishop of Oxford loved to gather round him.

It cannot be said that the records, brief and fragmentary as they are, of Ernest Wilberforce's Oxford career show any traces of absorption in study. At no period of his life was he much addicted to what is called general reading, and he appears to have contented himself with the amount of work requisite to secure his degree. He did not enter himself for honours either in Moderations or in the Final Schools, but in the latter he acquitted himself well enough to obtain the now obsolete distinction of an 'honorary fourth' conferred on pass men whose paper work had shown marked ability, but who had not taken up enough 'books' to entitle them to a place in the regular class lists. For some unexplained reason Ernest delayed taking his Bachelor's degree until May 1864, and before he was formally entitled to his hood and gown a great change had come over his life. One of his father's oldest and firmest friends was Sir Charles Anderson, a layman who was scarcely less interested in the great Church revival of the 'forties' and 'fifties' than the Bishop himself. For his third daughter, Frances Mary, Ernest had formed a deep attachment. Early marriages were traditional in the Wilberforce family, and on June 23, 1863, the young Oxford undergraduate was united to the object of his first love. The marriage was the source of unfeigned joy to the bridegroom's father; 'it has brought a beam of sunlight,' he wrote, 'into my so long shadowed home.'¹ To Ernest it

¹ *Life of Bishop Wilberforce*, ii. 90.

was the turning-point, the call to put away boyish things, the summons to walk steadfastly in the path of faith and duty. His wife was one of those bright and tender spirits who have the gift of bringing out the latent strength and developing the unrecognised powers of those over whom their influence is cast. 'Never,' wrote her father-in-law, 'was more light and love given through anyone than through her.'¹

The first years of married life were spent under the roof of the Bishop. Mrs. Sargent had died in 1861, and the loss of a woman's presence had been ill supplied by chaplains, however devoted. The arrangement had the further advantage of allowing Ernest to prepare for his ordination at the Theological College, which his father, in the teeth of determined opposition,² had built in the Palace grounds. The Principal at that time was the Rev. Edward King, afterwards Professor of Pastoral Theology at Oxford and Bishop of Lincoln; perhaps the most lovable personality that the present generation has known. The friendship between him and Ernest Wilberforce, begun at Cuddesdon, was severed only by death.

At what date the latter had finally resolved to consecrate himself to God's service in the ministry must remain uncertain. No letters of his on the subject are preserved, and his father's diary is silent, though there are significant entries:—'Into Oxford for All Saints' service: greatly cheered by seeing my Ernest there.' 'My Ernest with me three times. God bless him for his affection.' But there is no doubt that the main influence which worked upon Ernest Wilberforce during the most critical years of his life

¹ *Life*, iii. 369.

² *Ibid.* ii, ch. x.

was that of James Russell Woodford, a man of saintly life and a preacher of extraordinary power. He had been appointed one of his examining chaplains by Bishop Wilberforce in 1858, and was regarded by him with a respect and affection which break out in page after page of his biography.¹ Devoid of external graces, the rare simplicity and sincerity of his nature had an irresistible fascination for young men. His addresses during the Ordination weeks were famous far outside the walls of Cuddesdon Chapel, and his administration in after years of the vast parish of Leeds and of the diocese of Ely revealed to the world his mastery of the practical side of the pastoral office. Until death came to part them,² Ernest Wilberforce never failed to turn for advice and counsel to the friend whose guidance had been so priceless to him in the days of early manhood.

On December 18, 1864, he received deacon's orders at the hands of his father. ;

— My beloved Ernest (wrote the Bishop on the evening of that day to Reginald, now the eldest of his sons) has passed an excellent examination, having been placed by the chaplain the *first* of the deacons. This has been a most happy thing to me, but not so much as the very nice state of mind which he has shown. I never saw anyone so *come on* in the highest things.

Living with his wife at the Palace, Ernest undertook the duty of curate in the parish of Cuddesdon, and acted as his father's domestic chaplain, a most happy arrangement for all concerned. His name never recurs in

¹ 'You will hardly hear in London so good a sermon as Woodford will preach here,' wrote the Bishop, from the Isle of Wight, to Ernest, on the eve of what was destined to be his last Ordination.

² Bishop Woodford died Oct. 24, 1885.

the Bishop's diary without some endearing prefix, the letters from father to son brim over with affection; and a story has survived from those days which illustrates the readiness for humorous retort which was one of Ernest's strong characteristics. One Sunday he had to ride over to take the afternoon service at a vacant country living. Ministers of religion were by statute free of toll on Sundays when on their way to duty, but it was a point of honour with the Anglican clergy not to avail themselves of the privilege. On this occasion Ernest was in too great a hurry to stop, so he called out 'Minister of religion,' and galloped on. 'What denomination?' shouted the toll-keeper, who had to enter it in his book. 'Pædo-Baptist,' was the horseman's answer, and the credit of the establishment was saved.

He was ordained priest at Christmas, 1865; and in the February of the new year he accepted the curacy of Lea, the Lincolnshire village which was the home of his wife's family. 'Dearest Ernest and Fan left yesterday,' wrote the Bishop. 'I feel very low without them. The people will sorely miss him, he has made himself so popular in the parish.' Within a few months of their departure the small Oxfordshire living of Middleton-Stoney, near Bicester, fell vacant, and to it the Bishop of Oxford, in whose gift it lay, presented his son without misgiving. Here Ernest Wilberforce found his first independent sphere of action; and here he developed that gift of direct, unvarnished speech which was the secret of his success in the pulpit. The intense reserve in which he habitually shrouded himself had left even his own brothers in the dark as to the depth of feeling and power of language which it concealed.

I fancy that no one was more astonished than I was (writes one of them), when I went to Middleton-Stoney in 1867, to hear the very excellent sermons be preached in that church. I look back on them as being some of the very best I ever heard, and the good material was coupled with a perfect delivery.

‘I have made very few friendships late in life’ was the testimony of one of his chief parishioners, a leading layman in the diocese of Oxford;¹ ‘but I have never made one that has been so much to my good as yours. I look back to my first acquaintance with you as almost a first understanding of true Church teaching.’

But dark clouds were gathering over the day that promised so brightly. In October 1868 it fell to Ernest to break to his father the news that his sister Emily and her husband, Henry Pye, had joined the Church of Rome. The heart-broken entries in his diary show how deeply the Bishop’s spirit was moved. In the hour of prostration he records that ‘Ernest’s letters have soothed me greatly’; while he is compelled to refuse ‘your loving proposal that I should come and weep with you. I believe,’ he adds, ‘that I had better keep straight on through all I had previously planned, unless I absolutely break down, when I will get into a train and go.’

The time was fast approaching when the devoted son was himself to stand in sore need of all the consolation which human sympathy can render. In October 1870 Mrs. Ernest Wilberforce died at San Remo, whither her husband had taken her in the vain hope of arresting the ravages of that fell disease, consumption.

There were no children of the marriage. Ernest had

¹ Mr. W. Dewar, of Cotmore House, Bicester.

resigned his living some months before his bereavement, and he now went back to his old post as domestic chaplain to his father, a post which had just been vacated by his brother Basil, recently appointed to the Rectory of St. Mary, Southampton. In October 1869 Samuel Wilberforce had been translated to the see of Winchester, on the resignation of Bishop Sumner, the bishop who had given him a stall in that cathedral as far back as 1840, and who was destined to survive him by several years. The aged prelate retained possession of Farnham Castle, and the successor made Winchester House, in St. James's Square, his official residence,¹ though a portion of his time was still reserved for Lavington, 'that place of grateful memory,' as Lord Overstone called it, 'of hard living, of hard riding, hard walking, hard talking, and soft kindness.' A fresh tie united son and father: each of them had gone down in the pride of early manhood into the Valley of the Shadow, and each had come out purified and tempered as by fire.

The Bishop's allotted span was drawing to its close, but the last years were soothed by the companionship and the watchful care of one whose temperament was as sympathetic if less demonstrative than his own. The closest mutual confidence subsisted between them, and such intimate association with the man whom Dean Burgon styled the Remodeller of the Episcopacy gave Ernest Wilberforce a knowledge of staff-work, to use a military metaphor, which proved invaluable in the near future. No better training could have been devised for the responsibilities to which he was destined.

In 1871 he was appointed, on the recommendation of Dean Wellesley, Sub-Almoner to the Queen, a piece

¹ He also rented Beddington House, near Croydon.

of preferment which gave especial gratification to his father, who had held that position from 1844 to his consecration in 1846.

The shock of his wife's death had seriously affected his health, and some time earlier the fall of a heavy bough in the Cuddesdon plantations had lacerated the muscles of his back, an injury which to the end of his days brought on occasional attacks of the severest pain.¹ In June 1871 he was advised to take a holiday in Canada, where he extended his travels as far as Vancouver, and in the autumn of 1872 he was ordered a sea voyage to South Africa, lands which he was destined to revisit under very different auspices. 'My dearest Ernest sailing for the Cape,' records the Bishop on October 10. 'May God be with him; my heart aches so I can hardly write about it.' The New Year saw him back again in England, and the Bishop is once more 'light-hearted because Ernest is with me.' But the great separation was at hand. On July 18 Ernest started on a long-planned fishing expedition to Swedish Lapland. 'O my God, guard him and bring him back in peace,' is almost the last entry in the diary of Samuel Wilberforce.² It had been a desperately busy week, and part of the programme had been a great dinner to the archdeacons and rural deans of the diocese, given at Winchester House. It was a man's dinner-party, but Mrs. Reginald Wilberforce was present, and also, by the Bishop's special

¹ It seems probable that there was some slight injury to the spine, which modern science would infallibly have detected and probably have healed. In the spasms of agony which from time to time overcame him, the only way in which he was able to obtain relief was by lying flat upon the floor. The brief entries in his little pocket diary contain constant reference to his 'thorn in the flesh,' which was largely responsible for the fits of acute depression to which he was subject.

² *Life*, iii. p. 422.

desire, Miss Emily Connor, daughter of the Vicar of Newport, a young lady who was destined to play a very important part in the life of Ernest Wilberforce.

The latter landed in Sweden on the 22nd, and was met by a telegram which seemed to blacken the sunlight in the heavens—‘Our dear father has been taken from us.’ I need not repeat the story how, on July 19, 1873, ‘by a fall from his horse,’ Samuel, Bishop of Winchester, ‘was called suddenly from unwearied labour to eternal rest.’¹ The funeral was fixed for the 25th. Travelling night and day, Ernest was just in time to join the band of mourners round the open grave in which reposed the body of the mother he had scarcely known. The Bishop had left the strictest injunctions that no power on earth was to prevent his being buried at Lavington by her side, and there his sons laid him, sorrowing and oppressed, but strong in the memory of his great example and of his tender love.

¹ These are the words carved on the stone in Chiddingfold churchyard, where the Bishop’s coffin rested on the sad journey from Abinger to Lavington.

CHAPTER II

SEAFORTH—1873-1878

Offer of the vicarage of Seaforth—Letter from Mr. Gladstone—The church—The parish—The congregation—Raising the standard of worship—Troubles and difficulties—Offer of other preferment—Marriage to Miss Connor—Temperance work—Relations with his brother clergy—Croydon Church Congress—Lenten lectures at St. Peter's, Eaton Square.

HIS father's death left Ernest Wilberforce stranded, and for the moment he looked in vain for that anodyne which hard and systematic work alone can bring. The pause, however, was of very brief duration, and the recall to active labour in the Church came from his father's devoted admirer, Mr. Gladstone.

MY DEAR MR. WILBERFORCE (wrote the Prime Minister on August 11),—I understand you wish for immediate employment. In my personal capacity I have now to present to the Church of St. Thomas, Seaforth (a suburb of Liverpool), by the sea at the mouth of the Mersey. Not beautiful (except the water), very healthy. Recently made a parish—few poor—congregation well off, but much want educating. After much pains I hoped I had a very good man in Mr. Gobat, son of the Bishop at Jerusalem, but unhappily he has met a very sudden death. The fixed endowment is £270 or £280, with a house. There is further a sum of, I think, £160 or so from pew rents, one half of the

church being subject to moderate rents. The church is very ugly. It ought to be rebuilt. But I can promise nothing from myself, for with a very strong desire to complete the essence of a work of my father's, I have given money out of all proportion to my means with relation to what I do or can do in other places. It is a long story which I could tell you *viva voce*.

If you could take this church it would be a true delight to me to present you to it; first as the son of your great and dear father, who seems even now at my hand (nor should I exclude a more venerable memory),¹ secondly from all I have heard of you in the work of the Holy Ministry.

If you entertain this, perhaps you would come to Hawarden and see me there on your way.

Ernest Wilberforce's answer has not been preserved; but from the letter addressed to him by the same correspondent a few days later it was plain that the proposal was one which both took him by surprise and filled him with misgiving. Distrust of his own capacity was ever a failing with him; his inclination was for work in a large town like Leeds, under the inspiring guidance of such a man as Woodford, and the prospect of 'educating' a prosperous Liverpool suburb, rooted in the traditions of a narrow if fervent Protestantism, was not in itself attractive. Mr. Gladstone willingly acceded to his request for a little time to consider the question, while adding words of wise and diplomatic encouragement.

In truth (he wrote) I cling to whatever connects me with your name and descent; and I also have a

¹ His grandfather's. 'I cannot help here deviating for a moment into the later portion of the story to record that, in 1833, I had the honour of breakfasting with Mr. William Wilberforce a few days before his death, and when I entered the house, immediately after the salutation, he said to me in his silvery tones, "How is your sweet mother?"' (Mr. Gladstone in Morley's *Life*, i. p. 12).

belief as to your personal qualities that if you accept I shall have well discharged what I feel to be a solemn trust ; and that if you decline I shall have much difficulty in discharging it, by any other means, in a manner nearly so satisfactory. Since seeing you I have thought a good deal upon the matter, and, as far as I could, from your point of view. On the impulse of the moment I stated to you everything that I thought adverse. Upon consideration I am of opinion that you would find at Seaforth that what you had before you was a work of construction, and that, having acquired, as I believe you would do, in the first instance mainly through the pulpit, the confidence of the people, you would find it both a work of interest and a work of love. They have been for a long time in weak hands, with a vicar superannuated and a succession of curates (the last, I believe, the best). Of course when I speak of construction, I am not thinking of the material fabric. The Bishop¹ has written to me ; his wish is very decided.

The pressure was too strong to be resisted, though in the interval the Bishop of London² had invited him to take up the Incumbency of All Saints, Margaret Street ; and a week later Mr. Gladstone is expressing his deep satisfaction that his nominee has undertaken the work at Seaforth, and declaring that he shall always think himself the obliged party in the transaction. The congregation had been without a pastor for a matter of months, and it was desirable that Ernest Wilberforce should enter upon his duties with the least possible delay. He was instituted early in September.

Seaforth,³ five miles from Liverpool Exchange,

¹ Of Chester : the Right Rev. William Jacobson.

² The Right Rev. John Jackson.

³ The name Seaforth, as denoting a locality in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, demands a word of explanation. It was borrowed early in the

is now a wilderness of bricks and mortar, inhabited by a densely packed working population, which has swept away the last vestige of its rural associations. When the great Liberal statesman spent his boyhood there at his father's house and at Mr. Rawson's school, it was a remote hamlet, 'the sands, delicious for riding, were one absolute solitude, and only one house looked down on them between us and the town.'¹ In 1873 it was a pleasant residential district, largely occupied by the merchant and professional classes, containing wide stretches of open country, and to the westward an uninterrupted view of the Mersey estuary and the open sea. Here, in 1819, Sir John Gladstone, 'under the very niggard and discouraging laws which at that period repressed rather than encouraged the erection of new churches,'² had built and endowed St. Thomas's. The structure was in keeping with the age. The external architecture was typically Georgian and of the cardboard pattern; the walls were faced with stucco and painted drab. Inside, the floor of the nave was occupied with a forest of square pews like cattle pens, 'a veritable ecclesiastical Smithfield.' A gallery ran round three sides of the building, and in it at the west end was placed the 'choir,' a quartette of ladies and gentlemen of whom the treble and the alto were professionals. Immediately in front of the apse which formed the chancel rose a huge 'three-decker' with a winding staircase to the pulpit, into which the preacher was shut by a very decorous and portly

nineteenth century, for his house and the surrounding land, at that time entirely uninhabited, by Mr. Gladstone's father from the title of Lord Seaforth, the head of the Mackenzies, the family to which his mother belonged (R. E. Prothero, *Life of Dean Stanley*, i. p. 10 n.)

¹ Morley's *Gladstone*, i. 15.

² *Ibid.*; the words are those of Mr. Gladstone, not of his biographer.

clerk.¹ The whole effect must have been painfully incongruous with the ideals and associations of a reverent High Churchman.

The previous incumbent, the Rev. William Rawson, had been a much respected Evangelical of the old school, who had sat at the feet of Simeon and whose ecclesiastical conservatism had left deep traces in the parish and the church. The services and the customs of the congregation were on the same level. On the first Sunday morning after his institution the Vicar received a vivid illustration of 'the Seaforth use.' He had come down from the pulpit and had taken his stand within the communion rails, waiting until the offertory, which was being collected in time-honoured square boxes, should be brought to him after the manner prescribed in the Prayer Book. What was his astonishment when the churchwardens and sidesmen disappeared one after another with their boxes, or, as he used to phrase it in telling the story, 'bolted like rabbits,' and *did not come back*. There was nothing to do but to finish the service, and then, Prayer Book in hand, to follow the fugitives, who were counting up the money in the seclusion of the vestry. Here their attention was drawn to the Rubric which provides that, while the

¹ 'This formality,' writes his curate, the Rev. Dawnay Swinny, 'was soon dispensed with in the case of the Vicar and myself, much to the disappointment of the clerk, but not to my own, as the pulpit door had a rather awkward fastening. That functionary, however, was allowed to have his way whenever a stranger came to preach, and I well remember sympathising with a dignitary of the Church on one occasion, when, after winding up his discourse with a stirring and impassioned peroration, he was confronted by an annoying anti-climax. On turning to go down he found that the pulpit door, at any rate, was not to be easily impressed, and it was only after gentle means had been vainly tried, and it had sustained a somewhat desperate bombardment, that the refractory door suddenly burst open and allowed the imprisoned canon to escape.'

‘Sentences are in reading, the Deacons, Churchwardens or other fit person appointed for that purpose shall receive the Alms for the Poor and other devotions of the people, in a decent basin to be provided by the Parish for that purpose, and reverently bring it to the Priest, who shall humbly present and place it upon the Holy Table.’ It may be doubted whether any member of the party had ever read a Rubric in his life, and they were following the practice which had prevailed since the opening of the church, more than half a century back; but, to their infinite credit, the officials at once assented to the better way, and a sidesman, who was afterwards numbered among the Vicar’s staunchest adherents, volunteered on the spot to provide the alms dish, which hitherto had formed no portion of the church’s furniture.

The incident was a remarkable commentary on the address which he had just delivered to his new flock. After reading as required by law the Thirty-nine Articles and declaring his assent and consent to them, he had given, in lieu of a sermon, a short exposition of the policy which he proposed to adopt in his administration of the parish, and as the words he used, at what was in a sense the real beginning of his work for the Church of England, are eminently characteristic both of Ernest Wilberforce himself and of the course from which he never swerved or deviated, I venture to quote them as they were spoken :

I cannot stand here before you for the first time without saying how very earnestly I long for your sympathy and your support in my work. I am here as a stranger among strangers and I ask for your help and your prayers. We do not stand alone, my brethren, in the world, in any position, either socially or in our home relations, nor do we stand alone in our relations to the

Church. We are, every one of us, integral members of the Church of Christ; we are bound together by her laws, blessed by her privileges, and taught by her to attain to that Peace of God which at present passeth all understanding, and to which may God in His mercy, and in His good time, bring us for Jesus' sake.

It seems to me natural to say just a few words as to the future conduct of the services of this church. Now let me say that it is laid down in the Prayer Book as follows: '*And all priests and deacons are to say daily the morning and evening prayer, either privately or openly, not being let by sickness or some other urgent cause. And the curate that ministereth in every parish church or chapel, being at home and not otherwise reasonably hindered, shall say the same in the parish church or chapel where he ministereth, and shall cause a bell to be tolled thereunto a convenient time before he begin, that the people may come to hear God's word and to pray with him.*' I therefore hope, very shortly, to begin a daily morning service at eight o'clock, or at such an hour as may be judged most convenient for those parishioners who are most likely to be able to attend, and I hope after a time to add an evening service. I also intend to give the parishioners a more frequent opportunity of fulfilling our Lord's dying command—'This do in remembrance of me.' This will be done every Sunday if there be a sufficient number to communicate with the Priest according to the rubric. Twice a month it will be at eleven o'clock, and twice a month at such other hour as shall be judged most convenient. On Sunday morning next the Holy Communion will be administered at half-past eight o'clock.

Then let me say for myself that it will be my endeavour to obey the law as laid down in the rubrics of our Prayer Book. These rubrics, you know, are just as much the law of the land as any other law which is enforced by our judges, and by them we must stand or fall. It may be possible that, in endeavouring to obey these rubrics, some may think I am only seeking to introduce novelties into the services: such is not my

wish nor intention. I shall seek to perform the service according to the mind of the Church of England as declared in our Prayer Book, and I ask you to search that book for yourselves. There are necessarily some things unprovided for in the rubrics by direction or inhibition, and which may be described as neutral ground; in regard to these we must endeavour to bear and forbear in love, remembering that no two minds of any men are constituted alike in every detail.

In conclusion I will only say that I shall hold myself in readiness to fulfil the duties of the post I hold to the best of my ability with the help of God, remembering, as I do, those words of most solemn import in the form of ordering of priests, which I will read to you. *'If it shall happen the same church, or any member thereof, to take any hurt or hindrance by reason of your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensue. Wherefore consider with yourselves the end of your ministry towards the children of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you for error in religion or for viciousness of life.'* Such, then, my brethren, will be my line of conduct, with the help of God; and now I only once more ask you to help me with your sympathy and your prayer, for believe me it is no light matter to undertake the charge of a parish and the oversight of those souls for whom the Son of God shed His blood on the cross and who will one day require an account of them at the hands of His ordained minister.

On the first news of his appointment Ernest Wilberforce had promptly been labelled in the Lancashire press as a High Churchman. The imputation, or the compliment, however it be regarded, he disclaimed as strongly as his father had done before him.¹ His

¹ He had been for some time a member of the English Church Union, but he quitted it shortly after his appointment to Seaforth, in consequence of the violent language adopted by that body towards the Bishops, individually and collectively, after the passing of the Public Worship Regulation Act of 1874.

ecclesiastical standpoint may be defined in the briefest of phrases, 'Loyalty to the Book of Common Prayer.' He was anxious to have a ritual which, however simple, should be thoroughly dignified and reverent, and to give his people every opportunity for enjoying the privileges to which, as members of the Church of England, they were entitled. The practices of the 'advanced' school were then, and always continued to be, repugnant to him, but he was equally jarred by the neglect, half intentional, half unconscious, into which so many of the plainest injunctions of the Prayer Book had been allowed to fall. The standard of worship at St. Thomas's in 1873 was that which obtained in nine out of ten parish churches at the date of its consecration in 1819; the spirit which had moved over the face of England in the course of half a century had left it an obsolete survival, and Ernest Wilberforce was resolved to reform it in accordance with the ideals which were his alike by inheritance and conviction. The want of seemliness and order in divine worship, of which the anecdote on a previous page is a sample, was due not merely to the deadening traditions of the past, but to sheer ignorance of those 'sailing orders' wherein our Prayer Book is so rich. But he was fully alive to the fact that Lancashire folk may be led where they cannot be driven, and that any premature institution among his people of a *régime* which was bound to differ very widely from the one they had grown up in would be fatal to the object which he had at heart.

And at the outset he was encouraged by the ripe experience of Dr. Woodford, then Bishop Designate of Ely,¹ who for five years had been in charge of the

¹ He succeeded Bishop Harold Browne, translated to Winchester. It must have been a melancholy thought to Woodford that his preferment was due, even indirectly, to the death of his dearest friend.

greatest centre of Church life and work in the North of England.

Your letter, my dear Ernest, with the newspaper slip,¹ came just as I was starting. I have been reading it in the train, and I do think truly that it is a good start. What you said seems to me *perfect*, not a bit too little or too much, and calculated to conciliate everyone who is not an innate incurable beast. And I think, too, that it was very wise to begin at once with weekly celebrations as an essential in a Christian parish and with one daily prayer as the weekday shadow of the higher Sunday worship.

Happily for himself and for his people, Ernest Wilberforce possessed exactly the qualities which the situation required. A remarkably sound judgment enabled him to decide what changes could be made in the services and general organisation of the parish with the least chance of friction. A tactful and persuasive manner induced the most obstinate of his parishioners to recognise that at any rate there was some good reason for his course of action, and they realised that they had to deal with a man who would never think of surrendering any principle for the sake of mere expediency, but who was only too anxious to see things from their point of view. The keen sense of humour which he inherited from his father allowed him to look constantly at the bright side and to make the best of situations which to another man would have caused intense annoyance.

Fortunately perhaps for his peace of mind, all plans for the restoration of the fabric of the church were for the moment abandoned. In the light of Mr. Gladstone's letter,² he had no scruple in postponing the

¹ From which the report on p. 26, *supra*, is taken. ² *Supra*, p. 22,

project of rebuilding till the means were forthcoming. He was wont to console himself and his friends with the reflection that ‘perhaps by some lucky chance it may take fire ; you never can tell what may happen.’ This resolution left him free to devote his whole energies to the quickening of the spiritual life of the people who had been entrusted to his charge. Innovations indeed there were in the conduct and character of the services ; a choir was substituted for the little party in the gallery, the surplice took the place of the black gown in the pulpit, and the congregation were much exercised in mind when the Vicar turned to the east as he recited the Apostles’ Creed from the reading-desk, bringing thereby his face within a few inches of the front boards of the old three-decker. But these were only among the outward and visible signs of the change that had come over the parish. The daily services, the observation of saints’ days, the catechising of the children on Sunday afternoons, above all the frequent and regular celebration of the Holy Communion, are so much a matter of course to-day that it seems almost trivial to dwell upon them. We should transport ourselves back to the Liverpool of ‘the seventies’ to realise the shock which they inflicted on a congregation with no ambition beyond that of treading in the ancient ways, and among whom anything remotely approaching to ‘High Church’ was regarded with suspicion and frank hostility. ‘Hymns Ancient and Modern,’ with which he had replaced the metrical compilation previously in use, was stigmatised by an aggrieved parishioner as ‘rank Popery.’¹ And there

¹ The following episode at one of the Easter vestry meetings, as reported in the local press, is a sample of the spirit in which innovations were regarded by a section of the congregation :—

‘Mr. J. G. Stredder then rose in an excited manner to object. He was

were others to whom change of any kind was objectionable and who did not hesitate to let the Vicar know, in language the reverse of polite, their opinion of his supposed tendencies. The modesty of the writers prevented them from signing their names, and Wilberforce caused a good deal of amusement at a parochial gathering by expressing a wish that the authors of these anonymous communications would write more legibly and on better paper, as he sometimes had a good deal of trouble in making out their letters.

But on the other hand the great body of the parishioners responded readily to the new influence and to the lovable personality which had come among them. The congregations which crowded the church on Sunday were in themselves an answer to his censorious correspondents. The hard-headed Lancastrians were quick to recognise the sincerity and the reality of their new Vicar. They might not agree with his churchmanship; they could not fail to be drawn by his thorough 'straightness' and his courage. In their own words, 'he was a man first and a parson afterwards.' While he never forgot his pastoral relation to his people, few men could have had less of professional mannerism. Those who

of opinion that there was nothing like the old parish churches for worship, and that it would be dangerous to meddle with them. Throw all those Popish hymn books outside—that was the repairing it wanted; sweep all the Popish cobwebs out. If alterations were to be made, the parishioners might be sure there was something behind the screen.

'The Chairman.—I cannot allow such imputations. If you do not withdraw them, I must make you sit down.

'Mr. Stredder.—I have made no imputations.

'The Chairman.—You have; you have said there was something secret behind the screen.

'Mr. Stredder (angrily).—I have not made imputations. I am only speaking of what is known throughout the length and breadth of England.

'The Chairman.—Please confine yourself to the subject, we are not talking about the length and breadth of England; confine yourself to the point at issue or else sit down.'

met him in social intercourse carried away the memory of one familiar with life in all its phases, who had 'seen the world' at home and abroad, but with whom every experience was subservient to the great cause of which he was the ambassador, and to the Master of whom he was the humble follower.

Yet there came moments during the first lonely year at Seaforth when Ernest Wilberforce felt that the task he had undertaken was too great for his powers, and that the soil was too stubborn. And when in 1874 there came an offer from Archbishop Tait of the very desirable living of St. Thomas's, Portman Square, he was sorely tempted to draw back his hand from the Liverpool plough. The proposal, moreover, was couched in language which touched him on his tenderest side.

I know that your father wished you to have a parish in London (wrote the Archbishop), and if through this vacancy I can carry his wishes into effect, it will be a great satisfaction to me to do so. I feel also from what I have heard that no one could be better suited for such a parish than yourself.

In sore perplexity Wilberforce laid the case before Mr. Gladstone, as the patron of Seaforth, and before Bishop Woodford, his most trusted counsellor.

MY DEAR WILBERFORCE (replied the former),—Any advice you can have from me about removal to London can be very little worth, for I am neither well informed nor impartial. You have undertaken an arduous work at Seaforth and the position has become an important one from your filling it. As a general rule I feel extremely doubtful of the advantages either to clergyman or people of a change after so very short a time, though I should think it very unlikely that Seaforth will hold you for

a long term of years. I am not able to judge whether this ought to be an exception to that general rule.

Reading between the lines it was impossible to doubt that Mr. Gladstone meant 'stay,' and the Bishop of Ely was more emphatic.

It does *not* seem to me to be sufficient to move for (he wrote), unless you find your position at Seaforth hopeless. If, on the other hand, you feel that you are *recovering* Seaforth to the Church, that a work is being done there, I should be disposed to hold on a little longer unless a really great post offers. . . . You know, or perhaps you don't know, that I am always looking to the hope of some really important parish, worth (in every way) your acceptance, offering in the diocese of Ely, and to the *great, great* pleasure of having you for a fellow-worker, as we once thought of your being, although in rather a different manner.¹ How soon I may be able to tempt you to the eastern counties I know not. I mention the subject now because it explains my idea—that for a great work you ought to be prepared to go, not for a work only equal to the present.

So Wilberforce decided to stay at Seaforth, and Woodford wrote to applaud the choice.

I felt sure that there was a work to be done there and that you would do it. I am certain that the value of north-country parochial experience cannot be over-rated. It must be very exhilarating to make a stir in the stagnant waters, and the poor people are taking it in, as I believe they always do when it is wisely set before them.

On October 14, 1874, Wilberforce married Miss Emily Connor, whose name has already appeared in these pages.² Her father, the Vicar of Newport, and

¹ At Leeds : see p. 22, *supra*.

² *Supra*, p. 20.

afterwards, though only for a few short months, the Dean of Windsor, had been an old friend of Bishop Samuel.¹ The union was one of deep affection on both sides, and the young wife soon showed herself a veritable helpmeet, both in brightening her husband's home and in making Seaforth Vicarage a centre of beneficent influence.

Great expectations had been formed of the bride (writes Mr. Swinny), and they were not doomed to disappointment. Mrs. Wilberforce took every opportunity of showing how thoroughly she shared her husband's interests in all that concerned the spiritual or temporal welfare of the parish, and by her amiability of character and social gifts did much to strengthen the cordial relations between the Vicar and his people.

Their homecoming was made an occasion of general rejoicing.

It was characteristic of them both (adds Canon Armour), and indicative of the spirit in which they regarded their relation to their parishioners, that an hour or two after their arrival at the Vicarage on the return from their honeymoon, when, as Wilberforce well knew, the villagers were eager for a sight of the young bride, he took her on his arm down the main street of the village, visiting many of the small shops, and dwellings of the humbler folk, to introduce his wife, who soon won all hearts not more by her personal attractiveness than by her true womanly sympathy and kindness of heart. The marriage, in every respect, exercised the happiest influence on Wilberforce's life,²

¹ *Vide infra*, p. 190.

² I may quote the words of an old parishioner written to Mrs. Wilberforce shortly after her husband's death. 'The dear old days when you came to Seaforth as a girl wife, how they come back! I do not think there ever was such a vicar or such a parish. I wonder if he realised what he was to us.'

and in the course of the remaining years at Seaforth, two daughters and a son¹ were born in the pretty, homely vicarage, whose place, with its lawn, plantations and gardens now knows it no more, covered as it is with streets of workmen's cottages and invaded by an encroaching railway and the continually advancing line of Liverpool docks.

One of the main motives which had actuated the Vicar of Seaforth in postponing the work of church restoration was the miserable condition of the parish schools. They had been built half a century earlier, when elementary education was in its infancy; they were damp and unhealthy, and utterly inadequate to the needs of the growing population. The liberality of one of his parishioners, Mr. Edward Hatton, provided a site and defrayed the expenses of the new buildings, and, at the laying of the foundation stone, Wilberforce pointed to the generous donor as a living disproof of the assertion that the National Church was losing her hold upon the people. Seaforth was essentially what is termed in modern jargon 'a single-school area,' but the scruples of the Nonconformist parents were carefully regarded, and no attempt was made to force the doctrines of the Church upon those who were unwilling to receive them. And Wilberforce laid down in the strongest language, that so long as he was connected with the schools no religious teaching would be given there which was not put forward by the Church of England in her corporate capacity, and which was not definitely and distinctly based on the Bible. No part of his duties interested him more than his daily visit to the schools, and he came equipped with first-hand knowledge to those fierce educational conflicts

¹ Ethel Maude, Katharine Sybil, and Arthur Roland George.

which reached their zenith in the last years of his episcopate.

Ernest Wilberforce has been aptly described as 'a very great parish priest,' and the words are to be taken in no restricted sense. He was much more than an organiser and an administrator. It was said of him by a friend,¹ a few days after his death, that he was seen at his best in a house where bereavement, sorrow, or anxiety had crossed the threshold. But he was no less in his element at the Lenten services, when a closely packed congregation, composed almost entirely of the labouring class, was drawn to the church on week-day evenings by the simple and homely addresses which came so evidently from the heart of the speaker. And, as he was always fond of acknowledging, he himself learnt much from the simple folk he gathered round him.

When I was in Lancashire (he told the Brighton Church Congress in 1901), I had a large Bible-class of working-men every Sunday afternoon, and I used to say to them this, 'Now, will you tell me whether there was, in the sermon I preached this morning, anything you did not understand or anything you did not agree with?'² You know how shy working-men are of criticising, and for some time none of them would utter a word. I said 'Don't say "I liked the sermon," or "It was a good sermon"; I don't want that at all; just tell me what you think.' They did not speak for some time, but, by and by, one Sunday, a man, who had been a Wesleyan, said 'Well, Mr. Wilberforce, you said so and so, and I don't agree with you.' Then the ice was broken, and Sunday after Sunday I learned from these working-men, first of all how little they understood what I was driving

¹ The Rt. Hon. G. W. E. Russell in the *Times* of September 12, 1907.

² It should be added that he almost invariably put the same question to his wife.

at in my sermon ; secondly, how little they understood the theological terms that were used ; and then how very often they wanted just what I had been speaking of in my sermon to be brought down to the plain proof of Holy Scripture, that they might go, and for themselves look at the point and really study it.

Wilberforce was by nature a mission preacher, as he was to show by his work at Winchester, in Canada, and in South Africa, but he could appeal with equal force to a critical and cultivated audience. The striking resemblance in voice and in delivery to his great father challenged dangerous comparisons, but he emerged from the ordeal unscathed. The readers of the *Liverpool Daily Post* were told by Mr. (now Sir Edward) Russell how ‘ the sound of a voice that is still ’ was to be heard in their churches, and that ‘ the familiar Wilberforcian tones ’ were once more echoing among them. Mr. Russell was not indiscriminating in his praise.

The true Wilberforce well of feeling (he wrote) was within, and the preacher had wherewith to draw ; and yet the water was not abundantly forthcoming. Occasionally when a well-remembered fulness of tone and depth of emphasis came, one might almost have fancied, with eyes shut, that the Bishop was speaking. But in the more level passages not only was the resemblance lessened by a slightly nasal quality of voice, but by a certain degree of nervousness, by no means amounting to embarrassment, but sufficient to detract from the power of the preacher.

Diffidence is a pardonable fault which time is bound to remedy, and if, in Mr. Russell’s metaphor, the lava had cooled in its transmission, that writer testified most emphatically to the preservation of the ‘ hereditary fervency,’ and ‘ the clear and positive preservation of the family tradition of evangelical zeal.’

It was only by degrees and almost painfully that Ernest Wilberforce came to recognise his powers as a preacher and as a public speaker, and it was through his exertions in the temperance campaign that his gift of effective platform eloquence was first revealed to himself and to his friends. He had not been long at Seaforth before he learnt that the national sin of intemperance was at the root of half the misery and sorrow which confronted him in his daily round of parochial work, and he flung himself into the cause with all the chivalrous enthusiasm for the relief of distress and suffering which attaches to his name. A movement was just then in progress for infusing greater vigour and better organisation into the Church of England Temperance Society throughout the Kingdom. In the great diocese of Chester, of which Liverpool then formed part, not a single branch existed, and it was almost entirely by the efforts of Ernest Wilberforce, of the Rev. John Wareing Bardsley,¹ and their lay coadjutor, the late Mr. E. P. Parry of Seaforth, that the reproach was wiped away. Thanks to their energy and persistence a meeting to inaugurate a central diocesan organisation was held in the Philharmonic Hall at Liverpool on January 27, 1876, over which Bishop Jacobson presided, with Archbishop Thomson on his right hand.² The large hall was crowded to

¹ The incumbent of St. John's, Bootle, and afterwards Bishop in succession of Sodor and Man, and of Carlisle.

² Bishop Magee had been invited, but he was unable to accept the invitation. He had recently made the famous avowal which was travestied into the phrase he did *not* use, 'I would rather see England free than sober.' 'I should not like,' he wrote, 'to have declined the offer of the C.E.T.S., and yet, if I may judge from the number and character of temperance utterances that I have lately been receiving from all parts of England, I should hardly have proved a *persona grata* to such a meeting as you anticipate.' For the exact words, the misrepresentation of which, in the words of his biographer, worried Magee to the end of his days, see *The Life of Archbishop Magee*, by Canon Macdonnell, ii. 44.

its utmost capacity, and the speakers were picked men—clergy and laymen alike. The Vicar of Seaforth, who sat on the platform next to his brother Basil, already renowned for his fiery eloquence, had characteristically effaced himself from the programme; but the chairman called him up, and amid the hurricane of cheers which his brief sentences evoked from the enthusiastic audience Bishop Jacobson's face positively beamed with delight. 'A chip of the old block,' he was heard to whisper to his Metropolitan as Ernest Wilberforce resumed his seat. Henceforward it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the temperance cause had the first place in his sympathies, and it is by his work in that behalf that he is best remembered in Lancashire to-day. His labours were indefatigable as an organiser, a speaker, and a controversialist. His advocacy was invoked far and near, and while he was in request for meetings in distant parts of the diocese and outside its borders, his own parish was still the first object of his attentions. A flourishing branch of the Church of England Temperance Society was got into order, and there are many who to-day can bear grateful testimony to his devoted and often successful rescue work in individual cases. Both branches of the society were strongly represented, and worked harmoniously together upon its broad and comprehensive basis. But it was felt by the more active members, as a result of their own experience, that in order to plead successfully for the total abstinence which in the vast majority of cases formed the only means of salvation for the victims of intemperance, they had no alternative but to become total abstainers. Dr. Hook once tried to persuade a drunken parishioner to take the pledge for six months on condition that he did the same himself. 'Aye,' said

the Yorkshireman, canny in spite of his cups, 'but how am I to kna' that thou keeps't it?' 'You ask my missus,' was the prompt rejoinder, 'and I'll ask yours.' Ernest Wilberforce put the force of example to an even more inspiring use when, at the first meeting of the Church of England Temperance Society in Seaforth, he came forward with his young wife, and in the face of the parishioners took a solemn pledge to abstain henceforth from intoxicating liquors, a pledge which was strictly and faithfully observed by both of them.

His large-hearted sympathy with all social effort, his persevering championship of unpopular causes found other outlets besides the temperance movement. And while his platform work brought him in contact with men of all creeds and persuasions, his personal qualities won for him the respect and friendship of many of the leading citizens of Liverpool, such as, to mention only two or three names, the late Mr. Thomas Ismay, the founder of the White Star Line, Sir William Forwood and his brother, the late Mr. A. B. Forwood, and Mr. James Barrow, who served as vicar's churchwarden during the whole of his incumbency. From the first he had been on the best of terms with the neighbouring clergy, many of whom became bound to him by ties of the closest affection.

MY DEAR OLD MAN (wrote one of them on the news of his impending departure),—I shall miss you more than I can tell. I don't suppose you have an idea of the good your coming to Seaforth did me. I had got to feel awfully isolated and was suffering even in the matter of health from it. Intercourse with clerical neighbours seemed of a chilly, official kind, without warmth or sympathy. The fault, I daresay, was my own, but that only makes me the more indebted to

you, and at the same time makes me realise what a loss your going will be.

MY DEAR WILBERFORCE (says an older man ¹),—You came here when I had been ten years at St. John's, and was beginning to feel jaded and weary of the somewhat monotonous round. You seemed to infuse a fresh interest and life into my work by the contagion of your own active spirit; and what shall I do now? I might have been a more apt pupil in the matter of temperance and churchmanship, but I have *imbibed* more than you perhaps suppose. Now don't catch at the word, which slipped from my pen. And that unconscious pun reminds me that I might, perhaps, have profited more by our intercourse if it had not been quite so humorous in its prevailing tone; but the reaction from the serious work in which we are both engaged was very natural and very refreshing too. And the contagion of your own elastic spirits has always been irresistible. I fear I shall sink back into gloom and lifelessness—'take to drinking,' you will probably add.

The younger men found a peculiar attraction in one who retained, in many ways, the heart of a boy; to him they were a perpetual source of interest; he would help them in their sermons, encourage them to talk about their trials and difficulties and make them feel that they had in him a friend ever ready with good counsel and advice. A small society formed among the local clergy which met each month for scriptural study found in Ernest Wilberforce a zealous, and occasionally a combative member; for in the course of discussion subjects frequently cropped up involving questions of controversy in which he was never slow to bear his part. The fact that his episcopal ring as

¹ The Rev. Herbert Jones.

Bishop of Newcastle was a gift from his old clerical neighbours at Liverpool formed a pleasing reminder of the happy relations which had been created and maintained during his sojourn in Lancashire. Ernest Wilberforce had been exceptionally fortunate in his curate, the Rev. Dawnay Swinny, son of a former principal of Cuddesdon College, who was with him at Seaforth from first to last, and who seconded him with rare loyalty and devotion in the various departments of parish administration. In the months preceding Wilberforce's marriage, Mr. Swinny lived under the same roof with him.

No one (he writes to me) could have been a more considerate vicar, and I shall always feel indebted to him for the valuable assistance he gave me in so many ways. And when his curate had to be pulled up—on which occasions his criticisms were sometimes of a rather trenchant kind—it was always done in a way at which it was not possible to take offence. He had an unusual capacity for hard work, and thoroughly enjoyed it! in fact he used to go so far as to say that what he liked best was having more to do in the day than he could possibly get through—and when taking exercise he did it with equal vigour, as I had occasion to know when walking or rather striding with him over interminable stretches of sand along the seashore, as we often used to do after luncheon, accompanied by his two favourite collies. He was a keen lawn-tennis player, and we often had a game in the vicarage grounds—a foursome if it could be arranged. He was a member of the local cricket club, and would occasionally get a little practice, playing more than once in the match, which has now become an annual event, between the Manchester and Liverpool clergy.

Thirty years after he had left Seaforth for a wider sphere the present Bishop of Liverpool could assure

Mrs. Wilberforce that the good work for the Church which her late husband had done throughout Lancashire was still a constant topic in his old diocese.

Neither the claims of Seaforth nor his ever multiplying engagements in the temperance cause were allowed to cut him off from old associations and old friends. In May 1877 he was chosen to preach the sermon at the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy, held annually in St. Paul's Cathedral. In October of the same year he attended the Church Congress at Croydon, and his doings there on the evening devoted to temperance are described in a letter to Mrs. Wilberforce.

I went on to the platform, and soon saw Duckworth.¹ The Bishop of Winchester² presided, and St. Albans³ and Harvey Carlisle⁴ were there. Duckworth's paper was level and useful, Carpenter's was good, but spoilt by his massacre of H's. Then Butler⁵ got up and read a paper which moved my indignation, and I sent up my card to the Bishop; he said he had already applications from 23 speakers, and there was only half an hour left to speak in, but would let me if he could. In point of fact he called upon me immediately after the appointed speakers. I had only seven minutes, but I thundered away and carried the meeting with me in spite of an attempted interruption at one point when some thought I was personally attacking Butler, but I managed to catch the ball and return it, and get cheered. I went away with Duckworth, who applauded me, and Dick⁶ says he heard someone in the train last night say it was the best speech of the evening, so I ought to cock my tail! but my voice was in rags.

¹ The late Canon of Westminster, who passed away while these pages were in the press.

² Dr. Harold Browne.

³ Bishop Claughton.

⁴ Bishop Harvey Goodwin.

⁵ The Rev. W. J. Butler, best known as 'Butler of Wantage,' afterwards Dean at Lincoln.

⁶ The Rev. Richard Bardsley, brother of the late Bishop of Carlisle.

Wilberforce had been from boyhood the intimate friend of the Right Rev. Thomas Legh Claughton, recently translated from Rochester to St. Albans, and of all his family, and the Bishop had a strong belief in his powers and in his destiny, and lost no opportunity of bringing him into notice.

I have a large Ordination, for me (he wrote, inviting him to preach the sermon), and I want a man whose words will be heard, and, when they are heard, will penetrate: you are such a man. I urged that old Lord Cairns to send you to Kensington *vice* Maclagan¹—but he seems not to have attended to my recommendation. I don't know whether you would have left those beloved Seaforthians—but the position is a very important one, and you would have filled it better than anyone I know—and there are plenty of Gin Palaces in the neighbourhood for you to pulverise.

His duties as Sub-Almoner brought him at stated periods up to London, and in June 1877 he had the honour of preaching for the first time before Her Majesty Queen Victoria. 'Your sermon should not be much more than twenty minutes,' was the caution given by Dean Wellesley, 'and don't preach about drunkenness!!' His watch assured him that he had occupied the pulpit for a minute less than the allotted period, and his kindly mentor was able to report that 'the Queen was *much* pleased with your sermon, and told me that you reminded her of your father in voice, only less studied.' A year or two later Her Majesty told him in the corridor at Windsor that she could have shut her eyes and thought his father was preaching.

In Lent 1877 George Howard Wilkinson, afterwards

¹ The late Archbishop of York had recently been appointed from St. Mary Abbot's to succeed Bishop Selwyn at Lichfield.

Bishop of Truro, and of St. Andrews, had invited him to give a course of week-day addresses at St. Peter's, Eaton Square, then, even more than to-day, a typical Belgravian church in which the pomps and vanities of this wicked world were amply but by no means exclusively represented. It would be difficult to imagine a congregation more unlike that to which he was accustomed on the Seaforth Sundays, but his forcible, unadorned speech, his knowledge of spiritual difficulties, his tenderness for human frailty, made a deep impression upon those who heard him on the successive Tuesday afternoons. The lectures, to give them their alternative title, were based on the verses of the 130th Psalm,¹ and they were published 'at the request of some whom it would seem ungracious to refuse,' under the title of 'The Awakening Soul.' He had chosen both the title and the text because, in his own words, 'there is, it seems to me, in that Psalm a picture of the progress of the returning soul when after long wanderings, or deep falls, or heavy sleep, it awakes and seeks out God; and then, having found Him, dwells on Him and learns to lead a life of rejoicing in Him.'

A short extract from this little book, the only collection of his devotional addresses which ever received his *imprimatur*, may help to explain the influence which he exercised alike among the cultured and the unlearned.

Week after week this Lent we have been led higher and higher by the Psalmist, till at length he leads us into the presence of the Redeemer, where the soul finds the consummation of its longings, the reward of its struggles, and the fruition of its hopes. It is not asserted that all come hither by precisely the same

¹ 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.'

identical road, yet the goal is one and the same for all. Some come from east, and some from west; from the north and from the south flock eager travellers. From the remotest districts and from the most contradictory surroundings they come, prince and peasant, king and beggar; souls who have never known great sin, souls whose burning love is testifying to the untold amount of forgiveness. Infants and grey heads, strong and weak, white man and coloured; some walking upright, some bent and tottering; a mighty army they come from every quarter. Yet their faces are all set one way, their eyes are all fixed on one point; they are struggling, striving, seeking to endure, so only that they may reach the revealed presence of Him of whom alone it can be said with truth 'He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.'

Somewhere in that band are you and I, my brethren. It has been ours, as the Psalmist's words were unfolded, to seek to find out how near we had got to the Redeemer, by seeing how much of His presence is visibly reflected in our lives. We may have come from out of the depths—some of us have done so; we may have joined the host at some point short of that—some of us have done so; still each one may here, in this Psalm, find a sketch more or less accurate of himself, as he journeys on towards the end described by the Psalmist; if indeed he be not now a wilful deserter from the ranks of Christ, or be wearing a mere outside uniform to which a convinced heart and a changed life have given him no honest right.

My brethren, is it possible that, dwelling in the Kingdom of Christ, the cry has never gone forth for us, 'Behold thy King cometh'; has the soul responded gratefully and in humility? Would you look at the marks of His royal approach? Look back, and see how differently things have turned out from what you expected once. The ways of our King are not as the ways of His subjects; the touch of His royal sceptre

differs from that of an earthly monarch ; here mark the impress of the finger of God. That trouble, how it has turned to gold under His touch ; that deprivation when the straitened soul mourned, how it has issued forth in a plentiful abundance ; that sorrow, well, it is there still ; would you part with it ? Is it not growing even precious to you, as it conforms you to the image of the Master, if, indeed, it has its perfect course ?

But how different it all is from what you expected, when you first left the bright enchanted land of a happy childhood, and turned to face the world in earnest ; the King has been busy round you. Those loving hands that once worked for you, where are they ? that tender heart that so cared for you, where ? that sweet attractive presence, or that honoured centre of the family life, where ? The King has called them, and they are gone, obedient to the royal summons. Yes, He teaches us deep lessons suddenly and we look back over the alphabet of His love, when the blinding tears will let us, and slowly spell out there some golden sentences of great encouragement, as we first learn to read the words, and then with something of distinctness to apprehend them, 'It is I, be not afraid !' Or the King comes differently, at some busy hour ; you are washing your nets, or sitting at the receipt of custom, and the heart glows as the unseen royal presence comes ; and you rise up and follow. Brethren, the theme is great, the time is short ; the King is coming to you and me daily, in His spirit, in His word, in His Sacraments, in His Church, in countless ways ; for us the Master is calling, from none of us is He far distant, even if at this moment the heart be fatally preoccupied. 'Thou art nowhere absent,' says St. Augustine, 'yet art far from the thoughts of the wicked ; nay, where Thou art far off, Thou art not away ; for where Thou art absent by grace, there Thou art present by vengeance.'

My brethren, these lectures are now over ; may it please our God to bless the words spoken in His name

to some hearts; may He of His abounding mercy grant that he who has preached to others may not himself be a castaway. Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER III

WINCHESTER: THE WILBERFORCE MISSION: CANADA— 1878-1881

Refuses St. Mary's, Glasgow—Canon of Winchester and Wilberforce Missioner—The Wilberforce Mission—Modifications of the original plan—Refusal of the Court of Chancery to sanction them—The fund lost to the Diocese of Winchester—Mission work in the seaport towns—Conducts Lenten Mission in Quebec—Canadian appreciation—Life at Winchester.

THE reputation which Ernest Wilberforce had acquired as a preacher and an organiser bore fruit in a proposal from an unexpected quarter. In the early spring of 1878 the charge of St. Mary's Church, Glasgow, fell vacant, and a leading Episcopalian clergyman¹ was deputed to sound him as to his willingness to exchange the banks of the Mersey for those of the Clyde. The offer was in many respects a tempting one: the new incumbent, whoever he might be, would find a large and handsome church in perfect repair, with a good choir and services; there were schools ready built, a mission chapel, and all the machinery of a well-organised parish. The congregation numbered among its members several of the University professors and other prominent citizens. In pounds, shillings, and pence the stipend was considerably larger than that which Wilberforce was receiving at Seaforth, and the liberality of the

¹ The Rev. Daniel F. Sandford of St. John's, Edinburgh.

parishioners relieved their pastor of many of those anxieties, mental and financial, which weigh so heavily upon the southern clergy. Pending the formal invitation the nature of the prospect before him was opened out in a letter from Mr. R. T. N. Speir of Culdees, a large landed proprietor who occupied a conspicuous position in the corporate life of the Scottish Church in general and of the Glasgow diocese in particular.

There is no part of Scotland (he wrote) where there is such a field for the Church's work as Glasgow, and none so ill provided. The Bishop, who is a very old man, does not live there, and, comparatively speaking, takes no part in Church matters. The eight or nine churches in the city are quite inadequate for the masses of Episcopalians from England and Ireland, mostly artisans and working-men. And what little they can do appears to me always blighted and hindered by their intense congregationalism and want of unity. The appointment of someone to St. Mary's (the principal church) who could take the lead, gather these separated congregations together, and infuse some real Church life and spirit into them, might, I think, be the turning-point of the Church's history in Glasgow, perhaps throughout Scotland; and from conversations I have had with Dr. Liddon and Mr. Wilkinson I think you might do this.

It was a strong and stirring appeal, and in his perplexity Wilberforce turned once more to Bishop Woodford, whose answer, while admitting the difficulty of the question, showed clearly the reverse side of the shield.

At first I was disposed to say 'Go.' Now I do not say this. I am inclined to think that the arguments preponderate for *not* migrating into Scotland, unless

you have yourself a distinct feeling that you would prefer working in a free Church. That you would *much sooner* take a leading part in general Church questions within the Scottish Church may be regarded as certain, but I do not know how far this is your line. The congregational system which you would necessarily be thrown upon in Glasgow would not, I imagine, be, in itself, pleasant, and you would miss the idea of having a territorial limit within which to build up the Church of God and to recover souls to the Faith. . . . I do not mind saying that it has all along been a dream of mine to draw you into the Diocese of Ely whenever a suitable post should become vacant. I say suitable because I believe that on the one hand you would not care for a rich living without work, and on the other hand you could not take a field of great work without income. This plan of mine, which is a waiting plan, would not, in my judgment, be disturbed by your going to Glasgow. There is another point—the Sub-Almonership. Would the Queen like your retaining it as a clergyman of the Scotch Church? She is not supposed to like the Scotch Church. Now I do not think you should resign this. It is a link with the past that you should hold this Office which it would be painful to break. Altogether, therefore, I am inclined to say ‘No.’¹

Woodford’s advice was followed, and the actual offer of the charge was never made; but it was becoming apparent that Ernest’s removal to a larger field than that of Seaforth would not be long delayed. It was no surprise, therefore, though a matter of deep regret, to his parishioners to learn in October of the same year that he had been offered and had accepted a Canonry at Winchester.

MY DEAR MR. WILBERFORCE (wrote Bishop Harold Browne on October 5),—Would you be disposed to

¹ St. Mary’s, Glasgow, was eventually accepted by the Right Rev. Fred. Ed. Ridgeway, afterwards Bishop Suffragan of Kensington and now Bishop of Salisbury; his brother succeeded Wilberforce as Bishop of Chichester,

undertake an important work in this Diocese : (1) as Warden of the Wilberforce House at Winchester ; (2) as organising, directing, and educating for Mission work in the large and neglected parishes in large towns, especially Portsmouth, Aldershot ; (3) as Canon Residentiary ? It has been agreed to have the centre of Diocesan Home Missions at Winchester. There is £10,000 for the Wilberforce Mission Fund. The Hants Diocesan Association votes £800 a year for two years, the Surrey Diocesan Association £100 for two years. The whole at present is about £1300 a year if we can raise funds to enable these two associations to keep their grants up ; I hope we may enable them to increase them. The Canonry, about £880 and a house, will, I hope, pay the Warden without trenching on their funds. £1300 a year ought to provide a small house at Winchester, and four or five mission priests, say two for Aldershot and three for Portsmouth. But I think it most desirable that lay work, especially women's work, should be associated with this. All we are doing at Aldershot now is by women's work ; we have a deaconess at the head, and a mission woman, both trained as nurses ; a crèche, a Girls' Friendly Society, and Mothers' Meetings ; they are prospering in all but funds.

I should much like to see all this worked in connection with the great Mission work ; almost all depends on the skill and vigour with which the scheme shall be first launched. There is plenty of jealousy both at Portsmouth and Aldershot : dread of anything even moderately Church-like rules in camp and city. Pious soldiers and sailors are generally almost Plymouth Brethren, but there are better men among them. If you are not too deeply rooted in the North, I cannot but think that a Wilberforce for the Wilberforce Mission with the zeal and tongue of a Wilberforce will be likely to give a better start to the whole work than anyone else could. The needs of our great Naval and Military towns can hardly be exaggerated. I myself doubt the expediency of having the Home, the base of operations, at Winchester : I should have proposed placing it at

Portsmouth. This, however, has been decided to be impossible, and I believe you think Winchester a good centre. All I can say further is that, though I am, in my own Diocese, the Commander-in-chief, I should wish to give all freedom and confidence to Generals of Division.

The letter and the offer contained in it need some little explanation. The afternoon which witnessed the interment of Bishop Samuel Wilberforce saw the first steps taken to perpetuate his memory. At the close of the funeral service a temporary committee was formed out of the party gathered together on the lawn at Lavington, and within a few weeks it had been joined by the whole of the English Episcopate, and by an imposing list of names, clerical and lay, representative of every party in Church and State. After much careful consideration and the weighing of many rival projects, the committee decided that the most appropriate memorial of the great Bishop to whom the Church owed so much would be the maintenance of a body of clergy for home missionary work in the diocese of Winchester, especially for the South London portion,¹ coupled with the provision of a suitable house in South London as a centre for missionary work. Statistics prepared by the Archdeacon of Surrey and based on the figures of the recent census had revealed an appalling state of spiritual destitution in the parishes south of the Thames, which in less than a generation had been transformed from country meadows and market gardens into hives of industry and rows of mean streets. It was felt that with a population which increased in so vast a ratio and at the same time was subject to violent fluctuations

¹ The then undivided see of Winchester took in the whole county of Surrey.

no mere building of churches would meet the occasion. The crying need was for men, for ordained clergy who could go among the people, seek them out in their homes, and 'compel them to come in.' Planted in the densest part of the late Bishop's diocese, working in full harmony with the local incumbents and supplementing their labours, but acting in the fullest sense of the word as missionaries, they would form a body of invaluable auxiliaries, ready for any and every emergency. The scheme had the recommendation that it was capable of almost indefinite extension. In the 'Wilberforce House,' as it was to be styled, lay the germ of a college of priests and deacons prepared and equipped for rolling back the flood of heathenism. And in the words of the committee,

they had good reason to believe that the proposal was one the accomplishment of which was desired and contemplated by the Bishop himself. It would meet a great and pressing want—it would be of immediate service in recruiting the health and possibly saving the lives of many over-worked clergymen.

On December 2, 1873, a public meeting at Willis's Rooms adopted the scheme with unanimity and pledged itself to raise the necessary funds. The occasion was remarkable for the eloquent tribute paid to the Bishop's memory by those two splendid types of English churchmanship, Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Gathorne Hardy.¹ Unhappily the response fell far short of the sanguine dreams in which the founders of the Mission had indulged. From one cause and another enthusiasm was allowed to cool, and energies were frittered away on a multiplicity of local memorials. The sum collected, a bare £10,000, was utterly inadequate, even with the

¹ Made Viscount Cranbrook in 1878.

addition of annual subscriptions and offertories, to the maintenance of the projected Wilberforce College with its twelve resident clergy, but a beginning was made on humbler lines. A house was leased in the New Kent Road, the Rev. H. H. Pereira¹ was appointed Warden with four 'missionary curates' under him, who carried out a most useful work in selected parishes of Battersea, Rotherhithe, and Camberwell. Then came an unforeseen complication owing to the redistribution of diocesan boundaries which followed the erection of the new see of St. Albans in 1877. To St. Albans was allotted the portion of Essex which had hitherto been within the diocese of Rochester. In compensation Rochester received those South London parishes² the neglected condition of which had been the main consideration in determining the shape of the Wilberforce memorial. The promoters of the scheme were in a cruel dilemma. They had aimed at establishing a lasting connection between the name of Wilberforce and the see of Winchester; South London had now been transferred to a diocese with which the Bishop had no associations, but the call of the overtasked clergy and the needs of the folk were no less urgent than before.

In the first instance the Council to whom was entrusted the management of the Memorial Fund approached the Bishop of Rochester³ with a view to the continuance of the Mission on a basis consistent with the original design and calculated to preserve its distinctive features. His lordship, however, while glad to accept the aid of the Fund for the payment of 'mis-

¹ Now Bishop of Croydon.

² Now (since 1905) forming part of the see of Southwark.

³ The Right Rev. Antony Wilson Thorold, afterwards (1891-95) Bishop of Winchester.

sionary curates,' could not fall in with the establishment of a central home and a community of clergy in South London, the maintenance of which, indeed, was already endangered by the lack of financial support; and the Council on their part, feeling themselves not warranted in giving up so essential a feature of the original scheme, felt constrained to withdraw their offer. The remaining alternative was to tender the assistance of the Fund to the Bishop of Winchester, to be applied within his now diminished diocese in full accordance with the original design. The proposal was accepted in the summer of 1878, and a vacancy in the capitular body gave him the opportunity of putting the Mission on a working basis by endowing it with a canonry, and at the same time of making it a living memorial in the most literal sense of the words.

It was with full consciousness of the difficulties before him that Ernest Wilberforce received the invitation. In common with the other members of his family he had seen with distress and with not unnatural mortification the breakdown of a project which had promised so rich a harvest, and he may well have felt that, in the metaphor of his brother Basil, he was being summoned to take the helm of a sinking ship. His years of successful ministry at Seaforth had not broken him of his old diffidence, and it needed all the support which his friends could give to reassure him.

I cannot help thinking (wrote Canon Connor, while his decision lay in the balance) that the hand of God is in this offer, man after man having refused and turned from the work.¹ In faith and hope I think you ought to take it up. Much as you may esteem yourself

¹ The Bishop's original choice had been the Rev. Walsham How, afterwards Bishop of Wakefield.

unequal to the task as it gleams in the distance, in closing and grappling with it your strength will come out; and with God's blessing, so far from failing you will have success. Inspiration will come from your father's dear memory, sympathy from troops of friends will cheer you on; and after a bit you will be able to rally round you well-known men to assist the official priests in the Mission. Don't undervalue your gifts, or underrate the power which will not be denied. A Wilberforce at the head of the Wilberforce Mission will be certain to call out renewed feeling and interest in a matter which only failed because it fell into wrong and unsympathetic hands.

The Bishop of Ely furnished an additional argument.

If there is a post (he wrote) which *he*¹ would have liked to see you in, I believe that it would have been in his old stall with a great work to emanate from it. Without the stall I should have hesitated—not merely on account of 'money,' but because the position of a Canon of the Cathedral is necessary to give the *ποῦ στῶ* from whence to work. Further it is a beginning of utilising Cathedral dignities, so that in this respect too the plan is most valuable. I differ altogether from the Bishop in his doubt as to the expediency of having the base of operations at Winchester. I believe it to be the proper base—that which will give stability to the whole advance. Portsmouth, etc., can be better reached by a guiding hand stretched forth from the old cathedral than from a new and less dignified centre within themselves. On the whole, looking at the work, at your qualifications for it, at the manner in which the call has come—at what I believe would have been and may perhaps even now be *his* mind as to what you should do, I say without hesitation 'Go, and God be with you.'

The call was accepted, and Wilberforce went south,

¹ Samuel Wilberforce,

little guessing how soon he would take again the northward road. He bore with him the affection and goodwill of his parishioners without distinction of class or creed, and their regard took tangible shape in an almost embarrassing succession of parting gifts. How deeply his loss was felt among his brother clergy I have shown in the letters quoted on a previous page, and from none came a warmer testimony than from his venerable diocesan, Bishop Jacobson.¹ No less appreciative were the terms in which Mr. Gladstone expressed his sense of the services which had been rendered to Seaforth by the man of his choice. 'Happy indeed shall I consider myself,' he wrote, 'if I am able to find a successor who will really fill your place.'

In his after-life Wilberforce often acknowledged that his residence on the fringe of the great seaport town was an experience of rare value and educative effect, and one which distinctly contributed to qualify him for his subsequent work as Bishop of Newcastle. The intimate contact of an entirely commercial environment, with its practical and concrete estimate of men and things; the ideals and limitations of the commercial mind; and withal the loyal and warm-hearted friendship of the Lancashire people when once they had given their confidence, all tended to make the five years spent in Seaforth an ever suggestive and pleasurable reminiscence, and contributed to the courage and resolution with which four years later he faced the more arduous and exacting demands of a newly constituted northern bishopric.

Yet the return to the old atmosphere, to the familiar

¹ It was a source of much regret to Wilberforce that he was compelled to leave unfinished the restoration of the parish church on which he had at last ventured. The work, however, was very efficiently completed under the supervision of his successor, the Rev. R. F. Smithwick,

associations, to the dignified surroundings of a cathedral close was undeniably welcome. Bishop Harold Browne, the wise and gentle, had been his father's trusted friend, Dean Bramston was an ecclesiastic of the school and tradition in which he had been nurtured and was much touched by the deference and delicate attention paid to him by one so much his junior. 'I do not forget the support you gave to an old unprofitable Dean when you were amongst us,' he wrote to Ernest Wilberforce in after years. The quaint but manly personality of Bishop McDougall brought a flavour of romance into the Chapter; and in Archdeacon Sumner, son of his father's early patron and afterwards Suffragan Bishop of Guildford, he found a delightful and congenial friend. The work was after his own heart—the steady discharge of the appointed duties during his turn of residence, the contriving of means by which he could be helpful to the neighbouring clergy, the adaptation of the cathedral and its services to the life of the city and the diocese, and the absorbing field opened up to him by his post as Canon Missioner.

I was Curate of St. Cross in 1881-2 (writes Dr. Burton, now the Vicar of Christ Church, Banbury), the Master was *hors de combat*, and I, a poor forlorn deacon, was left in charge for months; the season was Lent to begin with, but Canon Wilberforce saw me through. His wonderful example, his marvellous power in the pulpit, and the advice he gave me have been an elevating force, a *δύναμις* through all my Ministry. He was not above sympathising with a young deacon and giving him of his best.

Though, as will be seen on a following page, the fund contributed for the Wilberforce Memorial was not available, the diocesan societies provided an income

for the commencement of the task to which he had been summoned. He had brought with him from Lancashire the Rev. F. C. Kilner,¹ as his first recruit and assistant, and the foundations were speedily laid of an organisation the pattern of which has been followed in many other dioceses. Primarily he undertook the arrangement, and most frequently the personal conduct of Parochial Missions : next he got into working order the Mission districts which had been carved out of existing parishes, and he gave many an overtaxed incumbent the opportunity of a holiday by making himself responsible for the temporary discharge of the duty. The main sphere of his operations was Portsea, where the recently appointed Vicar, the Rev. Edgar Jacob, his lifelong friend and eventual successor at Newcastle, welcomed him most cordially. But it was not all plain sailing : the whole locality had been much neglected in the past, and in some cases the parochial clergy were not effusively thankful for the stirring of the waters. ‘ No doubt,’ he wrote to Mrs. Wilberforce, ‘ it is a very good thing for oneself to have a very partial success, if any, during one’s first mission, but it makes it harder to carry on the work.’ Yet the energy and the strong personality of the Missioner broke a way alike through distrust and indifference, and by the ‘ souls who toiled and wrought and thought ’ with him he was recognised as a true friend, a wise counsellor, and a bright and cheerful companion.

Here for the first time he came in full contact with the forces of sin and degradation. His previous experiences had shown him nothing to compare with life in the great seaport garrison or with the conditions which then prevailed in the cantonments of Aldershot.

¹ Now Rector of Gargrave and Archdeacon of Craven.

'Satan's invisible world' was indeed disclosed in the slums of Portsmouth; and the young soldiers and sailors, to say nothing of the civil population, moved in the midst of vice flagrant and unashamed. The demons of impurity and intemperance walked abroad with scarcely a challenge, and it was in the spirit of a crusader that Ernest Wilberforce flung himself into the breach. Here he learnt lessons that were seared into his soul, and which coloured his whole after life; but here also he realised the strength which comes from comradeship in the great war against evil. From no one did he receive more assistance and encouragement than from his brother Basil, the Rector of Southampton, and he rapidly came to appreciate the invaluable labours of the band of heroic women who gathered round Miss Ellice Hopkins.

A couple of extracts from his letters to Mrs. Wilberforce will show the conditions under which the Mission work was carried on: the first relates to Southsea, the second to Hale, near Farnham.

I am sending you also a very touching letter from a girl which was put into our intercession box yesterday; what a thousand pities it seems that such a girl cannot be got hold of: perhaps we shall get her before the end of the mission. Yesterday we had the Intercessory service at 3, then about 15 minutes tennis and walk till dinner at 6. Then the 7.30 service with a very fair congregation, so attentive during my 40 minutes sermon, it was most touching. Almost all stayed for the after meeting, and 3 young women for private consultation—we didn't get home till nearly 10, and I had to be up till past 12 to get forward with my work. Up this morning for the 8 celebration and address—I was alone as Hessey wanted a rest; Kilner is rather knocked up and we have got Oliver to take his evening service

for him, and I shall keep him with us for to-morrow. . . . It has been a hard week, and my Sunday will be a hard one ; but thank God it has done good. I can plainly see that N.¹ is moved—he is going at once to form a Guild of Churchworkers, and various classes, and seems in earnest. Many have been roused, *Laus Deo*. It has done *me* good, in many ways.

We had a very full schoolroom again last night, and the atmosphere is anything but invigorating. I praught² for 65 minutes, and they were attentive to the very last moment. I shall try and not be so long this evening. Many of the requests for intercessory prayer were very touching. Some poor things are greatly moved and touched, and in all humility, with great thankfulness, I can say that I am sure that God the Holy Ghost is working here now. I had a walk with Powell this morning after the Instruction at 11, and I have been resting and reading, for my head feels rather like that of a boiled owl at present ; the want of freshness in the air at the schoolroom is very trying.

But the days of the Wilberforce Mission were numbered. The Council had been over hasty in assuming the assent of the subscribers to the transference of the work from South London to Winchester ; nor was their offer to refund all monies which had been mentally earmarked for the former district a fortunate expedient. Apart from financial considerations there were many excellent people to whom the word ‘community’ was suggestive of a quasi-monastic institution, independent of episcopal control and reviving the discipline and vows of the Romish clergy. In vain it was pointed out that no vows or lifelong engagement

¹ The incumbent.

² A use of the ‘strong’ perfect to which the writer was much addicted in his domestic correspondence.

were suggested or tolerated ; that the missionaries were licensed by the Bishop, unable to work if his license were withdrawn, and only entering a parish at the invitation of the parochial incumbent ; that the ' community ' was simply a common house and table, with public prayers and a few simple rules for everyday life. The prejudice was ineradicable, and the views of the opposition were sharply expressed in a letter from Lord Justice Baggallay to Canon Jacob, who was acting as secretary of the Memorial. A strong intimation was conveyed to the Trustees in whom the funds were vested, and who were a body distinct from the Council, that they had better take legal advice before applying the income or the capital under their control in furtherance of the new scheme. Two eminent equity lawyers ¹ whom the Trustees consulted gave an opinion that the Fund was impressed with a trust for the purposes of the resolutions carried at the meeting of December 1873, and that until those purposes failed the Fund could not otherwise be applied. No such failure, in their judgment, was necessarily caused by the severance of the South London parishes from the see of Winchester ; and it would be a breach of trust, therefore, on the part of the Trustees for which they would be held personally liable if they were to hand over the principal of the Fund or any part of it for the purposes of the proposed establishment at Winchester, or if they were to apply the income or any part of it in that direction. It was further explained that the aggregate of the contributions of the individual subscribers formed a common fund and that it was now quite incompetent for the subscribers individually or collectively to withdraw

¹ Mr. (afterwards Lord Justice) Chitty, Q.C., and Mr. (now Lord) Macnaghten.

what they had given in order to apply it to what might in their opinion better represent the original intention of the Memorial. The ultimate fate of the Fund could only be determined by 'competent authority,' *i.e.* the Court of Chancery, and in the meanwhile the Trustees must invest and accumulate the dividends.

The opinion was given on June 27, 1879, and though it had no binding force, the weight of authority behind it left small loophole for hope. Ernest Wilberforce at once placed the resignation of his Canonry in the hands of his diocesan ; he had accepted it, he said, to carry out a definite work, and that work was no longer possible. To such a step Bishop Harold Browne would not listen for a moment.

We must try to work Missions in our great towns by our own funds only (he wrote). You have thrown yourself into the work. You are your father's son and I am sure you will not be idle. I shall certainly not accept your resignation of the Canonry. All I ask is that you will consider yourself loyally bound to throw yourself into Diocesan work. Mission work will, I hope, open to you in some form or another.

Ernest Wilberforce continued at his post ; and an attempt was made through the medium of a Chancery action to obtain for the diocese of Winchester some portion at least of the Wilberforce Memorial funds. The *coup de grâce*, however, was administered in December 1881 by a decree of Mr. Justice Fry, which substantially confirmed the opinion of Messrs. Chitty and Macnaghten, and finally severed the Wilberforce Memorial from the diocese of Winchester. The Wilberforce Mission was at an end, and with it collapsed the definite missionary enterprise among the population of 'the Great Towns.' The work there had for some

time past been carried on under difficulties which are best described in the following letter to his Bishop from the Canon Missioner, dated December 28, 1881 :

Mr. Justice Fry's decision (which I have just read *in extenso*) has, in my judgment, made such a difference in the prospects of the 'Great Towns Mission' that I am compelled to address your Lordship on the subject.

The question which now has to be faced is this. Does the Great Towns Mission justify its existence in the face of the fact that the Diocesan Society's grants for curates have to be diminished while the applications for aid for additional curates seem to be constantly increasing ?

I have, as your Lordship is aware, for a long time past felt very great dissatisfaction with the result of the Great Towns Mission. That Mission has of necessity to be carried on in subordination to the parochial system of the Church of England. This being the case its work in a parish has to be either of a missionary and temporary character, or it comes to be in fact the planting down of some four additional curates in specially favoured parishes in the diocese.

Now while that work is temporary and transitory it will be almost certain to fail of producing any permanent results. For, if the work done by a missionary during his stay in a parish cannot be kept up by local effort after he has left, then most of those who are affected by the Mission will either relapse into their former indifference or else they will attach themselves to some form of dissent. Those parochial clergy whose hands are already full cannot take up such additional work, nor can they often, in a parish whose resources are taxed to the uttermost, provide the means whereby that work itself is maintained. While it is plain that those clergy who had not much organised work in their parishes before the Mission are not very likely to be grateful for any additional work thrown upon them as a consequence of the Mission. Hence the Great Towns Mission fails of its purpose.

Again I cannot say that the scheme seems to approve itself to the diocese, or even to be warmly received by those clergy for whose help it was specially intended, though there are individual exceptions to this. Nor can I honestly say that the large sum voted for the Great Towns Mission would not be employed more usefully to the Church if it were now to be expended in providing more permanent help in the shape of mission curates selected by and under the control of the parochial clergy themselves. I am the more confirmed in this opinion by the formation of the scheme lately put forth for the rearrangement of the parishes of Portsea, and by the fact that the fabulous civil population of Aldershot has dropped from 18,115 as stated in the Diocesan Calendar to 9728 under the new census.

I have always looked forward to the establishment of the 'Wilberforce Mission' in the diocese as a remedy for some of the weak points of the 'Great Towns Mission,' inasmuch as it would not only have provided larger funds but it would also have supported a home and a training place for young men who might be specially prepared for home mission work. But as I cannot believe that the money will now come to this diocese at all; or at least that the very best we can hope for is the possible transference in some very distant future after the impossibility of fairly working the scheme in South London has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Court of Chancery, it seems to me that *now* is the time to move and that the move had better come from myself.

I venture then to ask your Lordship whether you do not think that the money voted for the Great Towns Mission would be applied more usefully to the Church, and more acceptably to the incumbents of the diocese in the maintenance of missionary curates under the existing rules of the Diocesan Society, and if so, whether I had not better bring forward the subject of the discontinuance of the Great Towns Mission at the ensuing annual meeting. For myself your Lordship will

remember what I said to you at Farnham not long ago ; yet I believe that I can find work in abundance in the diocese, as a Canon Missioner (as at Truro), in holding ten days' Missions, and in doing other mission work for a longer or shorter period when I am out of residence. In residence my time will be fully taken up in preaching work, and in giving (as I am now to give) two lectures weekly in the chapter room, etc., etc. But if your Lordship should wish me to continue the Great Towns Mission I will honestly try to make it a success. Should you agree with me I will at once write to some of the leading laymen of the diocese who have taken most interest in the home mission work, so that the proposal may not take them by surprise at the meeting.

The Bishop sorrowfully admitted the truth of the case laid before him and yielded to necessity.

Possibly (he added) some further development of mission work may open to us hereafter, as 'Development' is the solution of all mysteries now. Meanwhile I entirely agree with you that a Mission Canon can be most valuable in stirring up mission spirit and work in the diocese.

Earlier in the same year (1881), while the fate of the Wilberforce Memorial was still in the balance, Ernest had crossed the Atlantic upon a most interesting errand. In response to an invitation from the Bishop and clergy of Quebec he had undertaken the conduct of a Lenten Mission in that diocese, and he sailed from Liverpool in the *Sarmatian* in the middle of February. The weather was detestable, the ship by no means well found, and the company on board uncongenial. For perhaps the only time in his life he pleads guilty to *mal de mer*, and records that he has 'almost quarrelled for good with the sea.' Nor is Quebec at its best in the closing days of winter. He was depressed and

lonely, and he describes himself as 'feeling the terrible responsibility so much that I could sit down and cry.' His father's name alone would have ensured him a hearty welcome; for both in Canada and over the border in the State of New York there were those who had enjoyed the friendship and hospitality of Samuel Wilberforce. But the Missioner needed no such recommendation. From the outset he made a triumphant appeal to the congregations who assembled day by day and night by night in Quebec Cathedral. Opinion had been widely divided as to the advisability of holding a Mission at all; it was a new departure which many devout and excellent Church people regarded with suspicion; but doubts and apprehensions were dissipated from the holding of the first service. The ten days over which the Mission extended were marked by a quickening of the spiritual life of the community for which there was no parallel in its annals, and by a revival of religious earnestness in young and old which impressed the imagination of the most indifferent observer.

It is hard to say (wrote a correspondent in the *Church Guardian*, a Halifax weekly paper) wherein the Canon's power chiefly lay, but it was acknowledged by all that he had a power such as was never before wielded in Quebec. This was seen in the attendance—storms seeming to be no barrier at all; it was seen in the life visible during the service, the entire congregation entering into every part. Out of 2500 assembled last night hardly a mouth was closed. The worship was offered up by the congregation in a manner I had no conception of. Some who had not been to church for years began and came regularly. For my own part I can hardly say what was his greatest power. Sympathy was *strong*—very evidently strong; he was very *plain-spoken* and dealt in practical things, but did it

with great tenderness. His *earnestness* was certainly a great point; his clear ringing tones brought conviction to every one of his thorough sincerity. He was very seldom eloquent—no continued eloquence, at least—only beautiful strains here and there, particularly in descriptions. Another strong point was his ability to *spiritualize* everything; the commonest fact in nature was made to speak of Heaven and heavenly things. . . . His humble-mindedness acted as a charm. He never assumed anything, and by his very modesty he won the hearts of all.

It was a great strain and one from which he was long in recovering. Never less than three addresses were given daily, sometimes four, and on three days five.

Forty-five addresses and sermons (is his summary of the part taken by him in the Mission), besides all the private interviews, some of them of a most painful and distressing character, but in all cases ending in the lifting off of a great load of past sin. Oh, who would choose to be a confessor if he had the choice, and yet one cannot refuse the burden when God awakens conscience, but I can truly say after every mission 'the sorrows of my heart are enlarged,' as one tries to remember those terrible cases in prayer, and *there alone*.

He was painfully impressed, moreover, with the want of definite Church teaching on the part of many of the Canadian clergy, and with the opposition, even in the cathedral itself, to many of the simple devotional practices¹ which were invariable in mission services at home. 'Church doctrine is never taught,' he writes despairingly, and he made it a chief object to supply the deficiency to the best of his power, whilst he succeeded in winning over even the obstinate and suspicious to

¹ *E.g.* kneeling while the 51st Psalm was being sung.

conformity with the innovations they disliked. Towards the close it was evident that the work was telling heavily on the Missioner, but his indomitable spirit rose superior to bodily weakness, and he felt himself well repaid by letters such as the following, written on the eve of his departure :

I cannot let you leave without endeavouring to make known to you my deep sense of gratitude under God, Who of His tender mercy enabled me to go to you in the depths of humility and fearful perplexity and learn from your lips His holy will. Oh may He ever shower upon you the choicest blessings and fill your heart with that deep love and sacred joy which you so earnestly besought him for others.

Equally touching were the words of a working man, by no means an exemplary character in the past, who told his wife that he would willingly cut off his right hand if he could be half as good as Canon Wilberforce. So deeply were the benefits of the Mission felt in Quebec that immediately after its close a meeting was held at which the annual sum of 1500 dollars for three years was guaranteed in the room to support a Diocesan Missioner. An extract from another letter shows that the very human side to Wilberforce's character had been appreciated by the warm-hearted and hospitable Canadians into whose company he had been thrown.

Remember to bear in mind our conversation about the Camping (wrote Mr. C. W. Rawson), and in your arrangements for 1882 leave a space for a necessary rest, which shall be spent in the retirement of some Canadian salmon home, away back in the 'forest primeval.' Only send word a mail or two before, so that we can make the necessary arrangements ; and let me again say that you come to be the guest of many a new friend in Quebec, so that the miserable question

of 'the needful' must not be allowed to enter into your calculations, 'Time' will be all you have to find. Good-bye—God be with you indeed is the prayer of many here, and not the least earnest from your sincere friend. Many an earnest thanksgiving will be offered on Sunday next when you are at sea to Him who put it into your heart to come to us to say the words which in not a few cases have, under God, given a new aim to life.

The Canadian Mission, indeed, though brief in point of time, was an important episode in the life of Ernest Wilberforce, and the following letter, written from Lennoxville on March 17, after he had bidden farewell to Quebec, gives an excellent idea of its lights and shadows, its mixture of grave and gay.

MY OWN BELOVED WIFE,—Here I am, safe and sound, after a very tedious journey yesterday, beginning with leaving the Bishop's house at 8.15 A.M. and getting here about 7.30 P.M. after a wearisome stopping journey in close stuffy cars, with a good many *very* queer and not over-clean passengers at times. And now for my little history since writing to you on Monday last. We had a very large congregation at the 3 o'clock service in the Cathedral, and a good many to see me afterwards. I got some food at Rawson's between services, and at 8 went on to the Cathedral, which was literally packed full—they estimated that there were 300 more even than on Sunday evening; it was a very touching and stirring sight, and the papers said I preached 'an exceedingly powerful and eloquent sermon which was listened to with rapt attention.' This is newspaper language, but they were very quiet, and to me it was intensely interesting. Then came the giving of the cards, and I was literally *mobbed*—till I had to get some strong men to make a line. A young man told me that he and some of his companions heartily wished there were going to be another ten days of it—which, coming from a man, isn't mere sentimentalism. Thank God for all

this. It was most touching to have some old grey-headed men sobbing in the vestry as they thanked me.

The morning celebration at St. Matthew's at 7.30 on Tuesday was a wonderful sight—the whole church was full, and we had over 300 communicants, a good many shook hands with me when all was over. My right hand was literally *sore* on Monday evening from shaking hands with so many, and getting such hearty squeezes from some men. Directly after breakfast on Tuesday we had a conference of clergy at which I gave them a last address and pointed out some things which I thought might be done to gather up and deepen the results of the Mission. The Bishop told me that a great many wanted to know when they could have another mission! Lay people, I mean. I told him in six to eight years—and not before; emotion and excitement are all very well in their way for a time, but not to be repeated too often. . . . We have now (at Lennoxville) had the Early Celebration and address; Mattins and address, and short service of prayer at 12.30, and are going to dinner directly and to have another service at 3.30, with a third address by me, and then to-night I have consented to preach in the parish church here. . . . I had an interview on Tuesday afternoon with a Colonel R. which nearly killed me. He is by birth a Yorkshireman, but has been in Quebec all his life, is of good family, and has three or four thousand a year from estates in Yorkshire, but prefers Canada. He began 'Well, you have had a great success: you have had people of all kinds of opinion amongst your hearers, and I have heard nobody say anything against you; your manner is very good, you have a way of stopping and saying things to yourself which is very effective—you should cultivate this, it is good for preachers to have idiosyncrasies. You would draw very large congregations in New York. The Americans would like you, your English alone would be enough to do this. Yes, you would draw large crowds. They like to hear pure English spoken by Englishmen. Your verbs always come in at the right place. Some

extemporary preachers get hitched up for a word, and put in a slang word when they can't find another. I tell you your verbs come in always right; you would be a great success in the States.'

All this with great deliberation and with a nasal twang. I sat and 'squirmed,' as the Yanks say: I could see his daughter, who has been decently brought up, sitting on thorns as well during the progress of the interview. Certainly there are queer people in the world! One of the little boys at Charles Hamilton's asked the other day, 'Is Mr. Wilberforce's name Julius Cæsar? I am sure it must be.' Being asked why, he said, 'Because Julius Cæsar was the very cleverest man that ever lived,' there!!!

Oh how my heart goes across the sea in anticipation of the meeting and the home I am so looking forward to; it will be such a different home-coming from the time when I crossed last¹; I didn't care then whether the ship sunk or not, or whether she was six months on her passage or not, but now I am all anxiety to see my happy home again, and be with my darling wife and my sweet chicks; that I may find them all well and bonnie is my constant prayer.

He was back again at his English work by the beginning of April, and in May he received from the Bishop of Winchester an offer of the Rectory of Alverstoke, an overgrown appendage of Portsmouth which included Gosport and its suburbs, with their forts and barracks, and such well-known naval and military establishments as the Haslar Hospital and the Royal Clarence Victualling Yard. It was one of the most conspicuous and responsible posts in the diocese, forming a part indeed of the ground occupied by the Great Towns Mission, and it was here that forty years earlier Samuel Wilberforce, then Archdeacon of Surrey,

¹ 1871, p. 19, *supra*.

had carried on for a few brief years a ministry which was still remembered by the older parishioners.¹ Its acceptance, however, was conditional on his resigning the stall at Winchester and the wardenship of the struggling but moribund Wilberforce Mission.

It is just possible (wrote the Bishop) that you might prefer Alverstoke with its definite work, its great influence and its pretty settled income to the Canonry with its uncertain work and uncertain income. In that case though I should be sorely bested, I should readily put it at your disposal. Indeed there is nothing I would not gladly do for you and your father's son which was consistent with my own duty and promises. However, I confidently hope that Gladstone will not go out of office without placing you in a far better position than I could offer you.

The Canon felt that he was pledged to stand by the Mission while any hope of saving it remained, though his letter quoted on a preceding page shows the atmosphere of discouragement, entirely independent of the Court of Chancery, which was closing in on every side. The offer was declined, to the no small joy of his diocesan, and when the decree of Mr. Justice Fry brought the Wilberforce Mission and its wardenship to an end, he merely took up the old work as a Canon Missioner 'unattached.'

And there was much to make the life in Winchester a very happy one. The blending of the military with the cathedral element gave an agreeable flavour to the general society; and the college masters added a vigorous contingent, in close touch with the old universities and the varied interests of the rising generation. Dr. Ridding, whose epoch-making headmastership was now

¹ See *Life*, i. 169, *et seq.*

drawing to its close, and whose future career was to run on lines nearly parallel to those of Ernest Wilberforce, had been for a short time tutor at Exeter when the latter was an undergraduate. And the Canon in his hours of relaxation had never any difficulty in 'making up a four' at lawn-tennis, or in finding a companion for the long tricycle rides which were a pale shadow of the coming glories of the bicycle. These rides occasionally extended into regular expeditions, in one of which the present Dean of Windsor¹ participated, greatly to the mutual pleasure of the wayfarers. There was a constant coming and going of guests, especially during the Canon's turn of residence, when it would devolve upon him to provide hospitality for the preachers or other important visitors. Winchester was in easy reach of the Isle of Wight and of Canon Connor: on more than one occasion when the Court was at Osborne the Sub-Almoner was invited to assist in the service there and to preach before Queen Victoria. Wilberforce was passionately devoted to the sea: a voyage was the tonic inevitably prescribed to him after illness or overwork, and he loved the smallest details connected with practical seamanship. It was the dream of his life to find himself, if only for a day, the master of a well-appointed modern yacht, a dream which some few years later the kindness of a generous friend enabled him to realise during a brief holiday. But he was no less happy in the little craft which his modest means enabled him to hire at Cowes for the summer weeks. One of these, of Norwegian origin and build, had a name corrupted by the family into 'Smoky Pig,' and on board of her adventurous voyages

¹ The Very Rev. Philip Frank Eliot, then Vicar of Holy Trinity, Bournemouth.

were taken down the Channel as far as Babbacombe and Dartmouth. From the moment he set foot on deck, and hand and eye became preoccupied by the cares of seamanship, the worries of clerical life and official duty vanished like cobwebs before the salt breezes. The animal spirits kept under restraint on shore now found their full play, and made him invariably the youngest of the crew. Down to the end of his life the sea retained its rejuvenating power over him. When he went to the Cape in 1904 on the Mission of Help,¹ he would 'skylark' in a manner which made all on board revise their preconceived ideas of episcopal austerity; and year after year the Norway passengers on the Wilson liner found him the life and soul of the merry groups scattered about the deck. This aspect might have surprised those who knew him only, or principally, in his ministerial capacity. But it was of a piece with the fearless unconventional elements which counted for so much in his character.

English people (wrote a Winchester lady² to Mrs. Wilberforce on the eve of their departure for Newcastle) are so terribly afraid of ever letting themselves go and saying honestly how deeply touched they are by an enthusiasm for Christ, and then there is too often a shamefacedness in admitting that they had doubts, though they are thankful on their knees that a broader mind has fearlessly handled their doubts and either settled them or brought them to the foot of the Cross to be submitted as an act of faith. Your husband once said that a cathedral congregation was disheartening compared with a parochial congregation—if he could only know how helpful he has been, he would go on his way strengthened for the arduous responsibility before him.

¹ *Vide infra*, p. 316.

² The Hon. Mrs. Joyce.

To make the cathedral more helpful to the spiritual life of the city and the diocese had been his aim from the first, and he had by gentle persistence won over the more timid and conservative spirits in the Chapter. The grand Norman nave at Winchester was utilised for the first time in memory or tradition for a midnight choral service on New Year's Eve, and his Sunday sermons attracted a steady congregation of working men: 'he seemed to fill the listening air,' it was said, 'with a sense of *realities*.' He recognised, moreover, the rare opportunity afforded by our cathedrals of giving religious instruction, both by public teaching and private intercourse, to the leisured classes whose spiritual requirements are not always met adequately by the ordinary parochial ministrations, and who are yet unwilling to give offence by placing themselves under the guidance of clergymen unconnected with their parish. The courses of lectures which he gave in the cathedral for the ladies of Winchester and the neighbourhood were largely attended and deeply appreciated, but his influence was not confined to the hours of stated service. He realised, what excellent men sometimes forget, that the well-to-do have their dark hours no less than the poor, and that the craving for comfort and guidance is often the sorest in those who do not come within the scope of the regular parochial visiting.

Even if I were to meet you (wrote one of these), I could hardly, as well as in writing, tell you how very grateful I am to you for the kindness you have shown me, and also express to you the great and lasting debt I owe to you for your words on many occasions both in the pulpit and out of it. That you have sown in my heart grains of God's own corn perhaps

He knows best who Himself has blest it and caused it to grow. Over and over again when I have been sleeping some message spoken by you has awakened me—especially at your lectures,¹ which I shall never forget.

¹ He had instituted in Lent 1882 a weekly series of lectures for communicants. The class afterwards presented him with a communion service for the chapel at Benwell.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEWCASTLE BISHOPRIC—1882

Offer of the See of Newcastle—Hesitation as to acceptance—The movement for the extension of the Episcopate—Durham and Newcastle—Early history of the northern see—Delay in founding the Bishopric of Newcastle—Opposition in Parliament—Completion of the Endowment Fund—Congratulations to the first bishop—Consecration and enthronement.

THE busy happy life at Winchester was brought to an abrupt termination by a letter from Mr. Gladstone which Canon Wilberforce received on May 21, 1882.

I have to propose to you (wrote the Prime Minister) that you should now become the first incumbent of the new see of Newcastle. In making this grave request, I bear in mind all that it involves. But I earnestly hope that your acceptance of it may, if it please God, carry far onwards into a second century the unbroken association of your honoured name with the history of the Church of England, and that you may add largely to the records of the noble services of your father and your grandfather.

It is scant exaggeration to say that Mr. Gladstone's proposal fell like a thunderbolt on the quiet Surrey parsonage¹ where Wilberforce was staying with his old friend, Canon Vernon Musgrave.

¹ Hascombe Rectory, near Godalming.

Your letter has taken me so completely by surprise (was his answer), that I must ask you to allow me to take a day or two to think and pray the matter over, and to enable me to consult one or two of my most intimate friends who know me best, and are acquainted with my many faults and failings. I can only say now that my own prevailing feeling is that I ought not to accept, on account of my own lack of qualifications for the great office and work of a Bishop of the Church of God, especially in these difficult times.

Reluctance to assume the dignity of the Episcopate has long been a source of mirth among professional humourists. But it is impossible, I think, for anyone to read the following brief letter to his wife, and that in which Ernest Wilberforce records his final decision, without recognising that here at least there was no feigned hesitation, no *fuga ad salices*,—to borrow the metaphor of a racy writer,—but that the scruples were genuine and profound.

Here is the missive (he exclaims to Mrs. Wilberforce). Oh, *how* earnestly I wish it had never come, and God knows I know not what to say: I have to write at once as the post leaves before Church. I do not feel in the least the man for the office, and how awful would be failure: far better work where one is and do some useful work than go to a high post and fail. I cannot bear the idea of the black, black north—the separating from all the old ties of the south—the leaving that sweet home. And more, I cannot think that I can afford it—the ready money that would be required would be very considerable. I mean to go up to London to-morrow and see dear Wilkinson, and if possible Woodford, and come down in the afternoon or evening to Winton, and talk it over with you. Will you pray to God that we may be guided to a decision in conformity with His will? Ever, Darling, your own most loving but sorely perplexed Husband.

I know you will think (he wrote to Mr. Gladstone on May 25) that I have been an unreasonable time in making up my mind to the see of Newcastle. But knowing well, as I do, the awful responsibility of a Bishop's office, and my own deep lack of many of the most important qualifications for such a post, and loving dearly my present mission work in the diocese of Winchester, I have felt an almost overwhelming shrinking from the post which you have been led to offer me. But after much prayer and thought, and consultation with my most intimate friends, I have come to the conclusion that I dare not refuse a work to which I may humbly hope my Master is calling me; since the offer has come unsought, unexpected, and indeed unwelcome. I can go only into the new work believing that God of the abundance of His love will give me the help I so sorely need and will enable me to work for Him with singleness of purpose until I give back into His hands the vessels of the Sanctuary.

The same post bore a letter from the newly designate Bishop to Canon King.

MY DEAREST FRIEND (it ran),—I have had anxious days and nearly sleepless nights while I have been trying to refuse the see of Newcastle; but at last I have been driven to accept it. Pray for me now and always. Oh, the awfulness of the responsibility; yet if it be a call from God, He who has called me to the work will give me power and wisdom to discharge its onerous duties. You must help me; I shall need all the help and all the sympathy I can get. That great heart in Paradise is praying for me. Yet to be a Bishop at all! May God in His great mercy guide and support me.

It was indeed to the forefront of the battle that Ernest Wilberforce was now summoned in the forty-third year of his age. Of the nine new dioceses which

have been created since the year 1877¹ there is not one in which the initial difficulties were greater or the prospect less alluring than the see of Newcastle-on-Tyne. It is an astounding thought to those of us who have only known the Church of England in its full flush of life and vigour that until the year before Queen Victoria came to the throne the English Episcopate stood exactly the same in point of numbers as it did on the accession of Queen Elizabeth. The industrial revolution of the eighteenth century had shifted the balance of population and of wealth from the south to the north, the old conditions of society had passed away, new centres of life, new modes of thought, had come into existence. This is no place to say hard things of the Georgian prelates; let the responsibility rest with those who appointed them. But when the age of lethargy was succeeded by the age of hope and movement the reformers found themselves shackled on every side. The administrative machinery was not only out of gear, it was rusty and corroded, and sadly unfit for the new calls that were made upon it. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the highest places. Their swollen and overgrown dioceses were incompatible with the exercise even of the very modest amount of supervision which was expected of an early nineteenth-century Bishop. The rulers of the Church had lost all touch with the bulk of the parochial clergy, and organisation on anything like modern lines was a task of wellnigh insuperable difficulty. The evil was at its worst in the northern province, where seven counties, including Yorkshire, Lancashire, Durham, and Northumberland, were embraced by the four dioceses of York, Durham,

¹ Truro, St. Albans, Liverpool, Newcastle, Southwell, Wakefield, Bristol, Birmingham, and Southwark,

Carlisle, and Chester.¹ The urgency of the situation was at last, and grudgingly, acknowledged by a Ministry who had small regard for Bishops, either in the abstract or the concrete, and who looked with suspicion on anything which could be twisted into a revival of the Laudian traditions. In 1836 the see of Ripon was created, and in 1847 that of Manchester; but here the limit of concession had been reached, and by way of set-off the sees of Gloucester and Bristol were amalgamated into one. The next thirty years witnessed an enormous revival in every department of spiritual and material activity throughout the Church of England; and, thanks mainly to the exertions and examples of Samuel Wilberforce and Charles James Blomfield, a new conception of the duties and the possibilities of the Episcopal Office became general. But the higher the standard the more desperate became the task for the sorely driven Bishops of the larger dioceses. In 1870 an attempt was made by the creation of Suffragans under a half-forgotten Tudor statute² to cope with the ever-increasing population and to give some relief to the overworked diocesans. The experiment was fruitful of good results, but the lesson was speedily learnt that no 'Episcopal Curate,' however zealous and devoted, can fill the place of a diocesan Bishop or form the nucleus of a new and living branch of the Church.

As far back as May 1855 a Royal Commission, of which Samuel Wilberforce was one of the members,³

¹ On the other hand it should be remembered that until 1840 the diocese of Lincoln included the counties of Bedford, Buckingham, Huntingdon, Leicester, and part of Hertfordshire besides Lincolnshire itself.

² 26 Henry VIII. c. 14.

³ The other Commissioners were the Archbishop of Canterbury (Sumner), the Archbishop of York (Musgrave), the Marquess of Blandford, the

had recommended the introduction of a Permissive Bill empowering the Sovereign to divide any of the existing dioceses, under certain conditions of territory and population, and had scheduled a list of additional sees to meet the most pressing cases of over-population. But no steps were taken in this behalf until, under the Conservative Government which came into office in 1874, a determined effort was at last made to bring about a wide and comprehensive extension of the Episcopate. Bills were introduced into Parliament for the creation of six new sees, Truro, St. Albans, Newcastle, Liverpool, Southwell, and Wakefield, the occupants of which were to be placed in all respects of dignity and status on an equality with the Bishops of the old historic dioceses. It was laid down that no Bishop could be appointed until a certain specified income had been guaranteed, and the raising of the sum was left to private generosity, assisted in each instance by a surrender to the new see of a portion of his statutory income on the part of the Bishop from whose diocese it was taken.

Truro and St. Albans were the first to satisfy the prescribed conditions, and in 1877 Bishop Benson and Bishop Claughton were able to take over their newly formed charges. Liverpool followed, and Bishop Ryle was consecrated in 1880.

In regard to Newcastle, however, there was a

Earl of Harrowby, the Bishop of London (Blomfield), Sir John Dodson (Dean of Arches), Sir John Patteson, Sir William Page Wood (afterwards Lord Chancellor Hatherley), Dr. Christopher Wordsworth (afterwards Bishop of Lincoln), Dr. Hook, the then Bishop of Lincoln (Jackson), and Dr. Montagu Villiers, Bishop of Durham. The object of the Commission was 'To inquire into the state and conditions of the Cathedral and Collegiate Churches in England and Wales,' with a reference to the suggestion of such measures as might make them and their revenue 'available in aid of the erection of new sees'; it was appointed by Lord Aberdeen in November 1852.

disappointing delay. The formation of Northumberland into a diocese of its own was no modern suggestion, and the traditions of a Northumbrian Bishopric went back to the remote past. It was on the island of Lindisfarne, hard by the royal castle of Bamburgh, that in 635 A.D. the Saintly Aidan set up his 'bishop's-stool,' and from that spot began the evangelisation of the kingdom of Bernicia. In due turn Finan, Colman, and Truda succeeded Aidan as Bishops of Lindisfarne, and when Archbishop Theodore planned out the dioceses of England, a sister diocese of Hexham was constituted, while the island Bishopric was left in possession of Cuthbert, the patron saint of the North. The Hexham see came to an end in 820, and sixty years later the plundering Danes drove the monks of Lindisfarne, with Bishop Eardulf at their head, to the mainland. It is a familiar legend how the wanderers bore the body of St. Cuthbert from town to town, till at last, by heavenly guidance, a resting-place for them and their precious relic was found on the cliffs above the Wear. Eardulf was the last Bishop of Lindisfarne, and for the next ten centuries the Northumbrian Bishopric had its seat at Durham. Under the Act of Henry VIII, indeed, a certain Dr. Thomas Spark, the last Prior of Holy Island, and afterwards Master of Greatham Hospital, was appointed Suffragan Bishop of Berwick, though it seems doubtful whether he was ever consecrated,¹ and in the last Parliament of Edward VI. the Bishopric was for a moment actually divided. The extent

¹ Mr. Joseph Cowen in the House of Commons (*vide infra*, p. 90) stated that John Knox was designated as Bishop of Newcastle; but though the founder of the Kirk served as a preacher at St. Nicholas in 1551, the Bishopric to which he was recommended by the Duke of Northumberland was that of Rochester: see Gairdner, *Lollardy and the Reformation*, vol. iii. p. 341.

of the see was in the eyes of His Majesty's advisers too large

and reached to so many distant shires that it could not be well governed by one Bishop; and since the King, out of his godly disposition, was desirous to have God's Holy Word preached in those parts which, for lack of good preaching and learning, were grown wild and barbarous, His Majesty therefore intended to have two Bishoprics for that diocese: one at Durham, which should be endowed with two thousand marks annual rent, and another at Newcastle, which should have a thousand marks revenue; and also to found a cathedral church at Newcastle with a deanery and chapter out of the lands of the Bishopric.

The Bishopric of Durham was accordingly dissolved, and authority was given for letters patent to erect the new sees, together with a deanery and chapter at Newcastle; but the only overt act in this direction was the secularisation of the temporalities of the Bishopric and their conveyance to John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland and practical ruler of the kingdom.¹ Edward died before any further steps had been taken for carrying out the dissolution statute into effect. It was promptly repealed in the first Parliament of Queen Mary, in an Act the preamble of which remarked 'that certain ambitious persons, taking advantage of the late king's minority, made an interest by sinister practice to procure the dissolution of the Bishopric; that it was done out of mercenary views to enrich themselves and their friends, rather than upon just occasion, or godly zeal.' Here the laudable project for increasing the Northern

¹So says Burnet, but Collier remarks that, though the Duke may have had 'a prospect, and a promise too, of the temporalities, that the grant was executed in form of law is more than appears' (Burnet, *History of the Reformation*, vol. ii. p. 215; Collier, *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. v. p. 492).

Episcopate came to an abrupt end, and for three centuries longer the Prince Bishops of Durham ruled their undivided diocese with unquestioned sway.

In 1854 the Town Council of Newcastle, on the motion of Sir John Fife, petitioned for the creation of a Northumberland Bishopric, and in the same year a memorial to the same effect was presented to the Cathedral Commissioners ¹ already referred to.

The Diocese of Durham (so ran the latter document) contains at the present time an estimated population of nearly 770,000, and it extends from north to south a distance of more than 100 miles, with an area equal to one-eighteenth part of the whole of England. The progressive increase in the population has of late years been unusually great and rapid, the increase in the counties of Durham and Northumberland alone, since the year 1831, amounting to nearly 300,000 inhabitants. Owing to the opening out of fresh mines, and the activity of commercial enterprise, new and large masses of the working classes are constantly springing up both in the mining and manufacturing districts, and at all the seaports within the said diocese. Newcastle-upon-Tyne has more than trebled its inhabitants in forty years, but has only one more district church at present than it had 300 years ago, and at least 6000 children of the labouring classes are without school accommodation in the borough. The results are what naturally might be expected, a fearful increase of crime, juvenile profligacy of a degraded character, with defective information on religious subjects, and much indifference to the claims and duties of Christianity. From the above premises it is respectfully submitted, that the Diocese of Durham, as at present constituted, with its overgrown and increasing population full of energy and enterprise, is too cumbersome for the physical powers of one Bishop where an active *personal* superintendence

¹ See their Third Report, p. xli.

is so much required ; it seems not unreasonable to hope that provision may be made at the next avoidance of the see of Durham for the erection of Northumberland into a separate Bishopric, which shall include the county of Northumberland, with the boroughs of the counties of Newcastle-on-Tyne and Berwick-on-Tweed with such parts of the county of Durham as are situated in the county of Northumberland.

Petition and memorial alike were left unheeded, and it was only in the closing years of the episcopate of Bishop Baring that the movement began to assume tangible shape. Long and strenuous labours spent on the formation of new parishes, on the building of new churches, and on increasing the numbers of the clergy,¹ had convinced him that no one man could work a diocese with an area of close upon two million acres and a population which the census of 1871 had returned at 1,071,000 souls. In 1876 he consulted his clergy through their Ruridecanal Chapters as to the expediency of a subdivision of the diocese, and though there was manifested a natural reluctance to sever the ancient ties, it was generally admitted that the operation was inevitable. The Durham Bishopric Bill was accordingly introduced into Parliament in 1878, and the Bishop expressed his readiness to part with £1000 per annum of his revenues towards the endowment of the new see.

During the Committee stage in the House of Commons a remarkable attack was made upon the principle and details of the measure by Mr. Joseph Cowen, the senior member for Newcastle, who at this epoch wielded,

¹ In the years 1857 to 1878 the number of churches in the diocese of Durham rose from 171 to 342, of the clergy from 222 to 531. During the episcopate of Bishop Baring (1863-1878) the sum of £267,723 was expended in building new churches, of £119,313 in restoring and enlarging old ones, of £109,378 in building schools, and of £12,825 in establishing burial grounds (Hansard, ccxlii. 835, 843).

by means of his unique personality and of his organ, the *Newcastle Chronicle*, an almost unbounded influence throughout the counties of the northern border. Speaking as one who did not belong to the Anglican Communion and who held that 'the rule of a Church by a Hierarchy of Archbishops, Bishops, and Priests was despotic in principle and unwise in policy,'¹ he protested 'that had not the Bill proposed to fasten a Bishop on the borough he represented he would have been content to give a silent opposition to it.' In that capacity, however, he objected to it because

there was no popular demand for it. The number of Petitions that had been presented in its favour, the number of meetings that had been held in its support were insignificant. The only persons, as far as he knew, who had concerned themselves for the Bill were women, clergymen, and that small but intelligent section of laymen who took an aesthetic and architectural interest in ecclesiastical matters. . . .

The Bill proposed to establish a Bishopric in Northumberland. There was once a Bishopric in that county—that of Lindisfarne; it existed in the mists of history. Pleasant memories, however, of the lives and labours of the Lindisfarne Prelates had descended even to the present time. Those men were really pastors of their flocks. They interested themselves in the material welfare of those among whom their lot was cast. They were the guides, philosophers and friends of their neighbours and parishioners. But they lived before the time when Bishops had begun to raise their mitred fronts in Courts and Parliaments. There was not one attribute in common between the ancient and apostolic Bishops and the modern ecclesiastical creations. No one, he believed, would object to an increase of such Bishops as there once lived at Lindisfarne; but what

¹ Hansard, 3rd ser. cexlii. 829 *et seq.* (July 31, 1878).

they did resent was the increase of such state officials as the Bill before them sought to establish.

It must not be supposed that the whole of Mr. Cowen's eloquent tirade was couched in this strain. He admitted 'the great and honourable efforts' made by the Church of England during the preceding quarter of a century, and he quoted the half million of money raised by Churchmen in the diocese of Durham between 1863 and 1876¹ as an argument against the necessity for the see of Newcastle. But the whole speech with its bitter taunts at the incomes of the higher clergy was obviously inspired by the Liberation Society, a fact which was put beyond all doubt by the terms of his amendment—'That in the opinion of this House, it is undesirable, so long as the Episcopal Church continues to be established, to increase the number of Bishops.'

The amendment was rejected in a thin House by 75 votes to 38, and the Bill received the Royal Assent on August 15th.² Such words from a man as remarkable for his public spirit and liberality as for his extraordinary gifts of speech and pen serve to show the light in which Bishops were regarded by the representatives of working-class constituencies thirty years ago. It was reserved for Ernest Wilberforce to teach the men of Tyneside that the Church of England was no 'ring of parsons and bishops rolling in wealth and "swaggering in the foretop of the State,"' but was capable of fulfilling Mr. Cowen's own ideal as 'a place of refuge for the weary, of shelter for the poor, of solace for the sick, of help for the desolate, and of tribuneship

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 89 n.

² 41 & 42 Vict. c. 68;

for the oppressed.’¹ Long before his death the latter had been brought to acknowledge that his opposition to the Newcastle Bishopric had been a grave mistake, and he was as outspoken in his retraction as in his assault.

Four years, however, were to elapse before the scheme became a reality. The failing health of Bishop Baring led to his resignation in December 1878, but his successor was assiduous and unsparing in his efforts to raise the endowment upon which the erection of the see was conditioned. The Act of Parliament required a minimum income of £3500 per annum. In addition to the surrender of £1000 a year from the revenues of Durham Bishop Lightfoot made a donation of £3000 towards the capital sum of £63,000 which was necessary to complete the total. The Duke of Northumberland, father of the present peer, and himself a leading member of the ‘Catholic Apostolic Church,’ founded by Edward Irving, gave £10,000. The sum of £16,000 was obtained under the will of Mr. Thomas Hedley of Newcastle-on-Tyne, who had died in 1877 before the project had taken form. But the times were not propitious. Durham and Northumberland were in the throes of a great coal strike; commerce was depressed and agriculture was languishing: the black winter of 1879 is still remembered in the collieries and seaports of the north. But with the revival of trade in 1881 subscriptions began to flow in more rapidly, and in March of that year Bishop Lightfoot, on whose shoulders the self-imposed burden had hitherto been resting, issued a pastoral letter in which he handed

¹ Hansard, *loc. cit.* p. 842. The whole debate is well worth studying, especially the speeches of the prominent leaders of the disestablishment party, Mr. Henry Richard (p. 846), Mr. Dillwyn (p. 1644), and Mr. P. A. Taylor (p. 1646).

over to the clergy and laity of the diocese of Durham the task of collecting the final £18,000. The appeal was answered by the formation of large and influential committees in both counties,¹ but the response in money was still inadequate, and at the meeting of the Church Congress held at Newcastle in October, Bishop Lightfoot could not conceal his disappointment.

Cornwall received its first Bishop (he said in his Presidential address) four or five years ago, with what happy results I need not say. But Durham did not follow next. St. Albans and Liverpool have interposed while Durham still waits expectant. 'Usquequo Domine?' 'Lord, how long?'

The pathetic words thus wrung from the great scholar-prelate led, on the initiative of Bishop Fraser, to the inauguration on the spot of a special fund which brought in £3000, and the goal was almost in sight when an unexpected piece of munificence crowned the work with sudden success. Benwell Tower, a picturesque old building, almost within the boundaries of the borough of Newcastle, had been originally a summer residence of the Priors of Tynemouth: a chapel had once stood within the grounds, and there are still the remains of an ancient burying-place. For some time past it had been in the possession of Mr. J. W. Pease, a member of the Society of Friends; and the chairman of the Bishopric Committee, Archdeacon Prest, was agreeably surprised to receive from him, a day or two after the Church Congress was over, the following letter:—

So many people tell me that Benwell Tower is the most suitable place for the new Bishop that I think

¹ At the Bishop's request the late Sir Charles Trevelyan and Sir James Laing accepted the office of honorary treasurers, and John J. Hunter, Esq., and G. Gleadow Marshall, Esq., were appointed honorary secretaries.

you ought to have it. Funds do not come in very quickly and the purchase of such a house as you require must therefore be a difficulty. This being the case, I have concluded to hand the place over to the Committee, and, as it is not occupied, they are very welcome to take possession at once so that any alterations which may be considered needful may be made without loss of time, and their solicitors can communicate with mine as to the conveyance. Churchmen and 'Quakers' used not to get on very well together, but those times are past, and I most sincerely trust that the important step about to be taken may be in every way beneficial.

The gift, valued at over £12,000, was most opportune ; for the provision of an appropriate Episcopal residence was a term of the Act, and one which it had hitherto seemed impossible to fulfil without an expenditure which the fund so hardly raised would be sorely taxed to meet. The committee had now to their hand an historic house close to the scene where the presence of the Bishop would be especially needed, while the more than kindly action of one bearing the honoured name of Pease was a happy augury for the relations in the new see between Churchmen and those who stood outside her Communion.

The task was now accomplished, though it should be added that in June of the following year, between the date of Ernest Wilberforce's appointment and that of his consecration, a further donation of £10,000 by Mr. T. Spencer of Ryton showed that the generosity of the diocese was not satisfied with attaining the bare minimum laid down by Parliament. Yet, as may be divined from the sluggish growth of the endowment fund, and from the almost feverish exertions of its organisers, the scheme was not universally popular, and Joseph Cowen was not entirely wide of the mark in his protest.

From its first inception there were a great many, both of the clergy and laity, who demurred not only to the expenditure of so large a sum of money as the Act required, but even to the expediency of the severance of Northumberland from the Bishopric of Durham with its heritage of fame and tradition. And they complained, not without justification, as events were to show, that the Act made no provision for a proportionate partition of the income and patronage of the undivided diocese. When the creation of the see was finally secured in the spring of 1882, questioning and murmur gave place to loyal acquiescence, but it was felt that a very great deal of the success of the experiment would depend upon the character of the first occupant of the see and on his ability to fulfil the expectations which had been raised by the advocates of separation. The old diocese, scarcely less than the new, awaited the appointment of the Bishop with keen excitement, and it was hoped that the Prime Minister would allow himself to be guided by Dr. Lightfoot, who was trusted and beloved, and whose even-handed governance had succeeded in allaying much of the irritation which arises inevitably in a diocese where official favours have been long confined exclusively to one party in the Church. The announcement that Mr. Gladstone's choice had fallen on Canon Wilberforce of Winchester was received with the greatest satisfaction. The name was in itself enough to secure him a hearty welcome in the North of England, where his father's untiring labours and magnetic presence were still fresh in the memories of Churchmen, and where his grandfather's devotion to the cause of the slave was unforgotten by Englishmen of every creed and party.

The congratulations that were showered from all

sides upon the Bishop-designate were well calculated to encourage him in the new career that had been accepted with such painful hesitation. Whilst still in the valley of indecision he had appealed to his Diocesan in the evident hope of advice which might enable him to decline the burden ; but he had gone to the wrong quarter.

Mr. Gladstone did me the honour of asking me about you (wrote Bishop Browne), and I certainly could only commend you as highly qualified for the office. He thought missionary energy and ability of first importance. I have taken counsel with the Bishop of Ely and afterwards with the Bishop of Durham. I fear I can give you no comfort from what they said. The Bishop of Ely thought you the right man for the place, and felt, as all must feel, that your natural shrinking from it was only an additional proof of your fitness. The Bishop of Durham said that if you went to Newcastle, you would be cordially welcomed by him and by the diocese. He said his acquaintance with you was small, but that he also thought you most likely to be the right man for the place. I do not know how in the face of all this I can press you to stay with me, and in my diocese. I shall miss you and your wife very much if you go. I do not think that anyone can supply the loss. . . . If you should still decide against going, we shall only prize you more than ever because we shall have been so near losing you, but I am afraid to urge what is for the good of Winchester against that which may be for the good of the Church at large. I cannot say 'Go,' but I dare not say 'Stay.'

And when the die was cast the same correspondent was prompt to express his thankfulness that Ernest Wilberforce had seen his way

to accept the heavy responsibility but yet blessed duty and high office of a Bishop in the Church of God. We

shall miss you sadly at Winchester, and Mrs. Ernest will be not less missed than her husband, nor less a gain to her husband's future home and place of work. I cannot but think that you are eminently suited for the new Northern diocese. Your powers of speech, genial temper and missionary energy are specially wanted there. I am satisfied that you will conciliate without compromise. May God give you strength and wisdom and zeal and holiness for the great work to which He has called you.

Bishop Lightfoot, who, as the Churchmen of the north had hoped, had been consulted by Mr. Gladstone on the appointment, wrote amid the distractions of a sitting of Convocation, and while the offer was still unaccepted, 'to say that in the event of your accepting the office you will receive a most cordial welcome and every co-operation from me.' Archbishop Tait wrote warmly of 'the special gifts with which God has blessed you.' The Bishop of London alluded to 'the Open Sesame of your father's name.' Bishop Ellicott of Gloucester and Bristol, familiarly known to his episcopal brethren as 'G. and B.,' rejoiced from his heart that 'a true, faithful, and devoted man is added to our company.' Bishop Benson, to whom Wilberforce had turned as the first organiser of a new diocese, placed at his disposal the experience gleaned in the early days of struggle at Truro. From one member of the Claughton family he learnt how the Bishop of St. Albans had hailed his appointment by calling out across the breakfast table to the Duke of Argyll that 'Gladstone has just made the best appointment of his life; there is fresh hope for the Church of England.' From another he received, at Bishop Claughton's express desire, a collection of friendly hints on episcopal attire and deportment. 'I am to tell you that

Adeney, 16 Sackville Street, is the tailor who turns him out so well. He most earnestly beseeches you not to follow the vicious example of Bishop Lightfoot as regards the pattern of your robes, of which he encloses a drawing taken from life.¹

In a vein far removed from this affectionate trifling came a letter from Wilkinson of St. Peter's, Eaton Square, who was himself to be raised to the Episcopate before many months had elapsed.²

May God bless you, my dear Ernest, in this great work. Mrs. Wilberforce remembers what I have more than once said to her as to the gifts which God has given you. You remember a walk we once had in the Park when we talked of faith in its wider sense as expressing the power which is given to man of opening his heart to receive what God has already given us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Dear Ernest, open wide your heart and receive the fulness of the Power of the Holy Ghost, and let that Divine Spirit bring out for the use of the Church all the gifts which are only waiting for His touch to be developed. Believe that God has chosen you to be His instrument—to be the channel through which His life may flow out to your diocese. The more you feel your natural weakness so much the more do you dwell on the Divine Power which only requires for its manifestation the comprehension of our own nothingness and faith in the reality of His in-dwelling Presence.

The list might be multiplied indefinitely of those who showered their congratulations and counsel upon the Bishop-designate. The Archbishops of York and

¹ With the letter came a vivid pen-and-ink sketch of the back view of that Bishop as seated in the House of Lords. The advice was faithfully followed, and Bishop Claughton was able to congratulate him on becoming 'an episcopal *arbiter elegantiarum*,' and to describe how his own butler, in approving the cut off a new pair of gaiters, had said, 'Now, my Lord, that's quite equal to the Bishop of Newcastle.'

² On the translation of Dr. Benson from Truro to Canterbury.

Dublin¹; Bishop Durnford, whom he was eventually to succeed at Chichester; Bishop Harvey Goodwin of Carlisle, about to become his neighbour in the north; Dean Vaughan; Canon Liddon; Dean Lake; Canon Knox Little; Sir George Prevost, his father's dear friend; the Rev. R. Randall, destined to be in later days his Dean at Chichester; Edgar Jacob, his fellow-worker in the Great Towns Mission and who was to follow him at Newcastle; these are names taken almost at random from the letters that have been preserved. But from those who had known him longest and best there came one prevailing note, '*sursum cor*,' 'Lift up your heart.'

Eighteen years of devoted and successful labour in the ministry had failed to wean Ernest Wilberforce from a shrinking distrust of his own powers, and twenty-five years' experience as a Bishop were to leave him humble at heart as when he was ordained. 'Nothing of mine is worth publishing' was his almost invariable reply to friends who pressed him to print some sermon or course of addresses which had brightened the lives and lightened the hearts of those who listened to them. His long association with his father had taught him the crushing weight of the mitre and that the office which St. Paul had described as a good work might qualify its holder to be, if not a martyr, at least a confessor. 'Congratulate you in the common sense, I could not,' wrote Bishop Benson. 'No one in England knows better than you, why.' The shadow of his father's achievements had an almost numbing effect upon him, and confronted him with an ideal which he felt to be beyond his accomplishment. He was being advanced, moreover,

¹ Archbishop Trench of Dublin had been his father's chaplain.

to the highest order in the Church at an age which would make him by many years the junior Bishop on the Bench.¹ And he could not fail to be conscious that he had behind him neither academical distinction nor the prestige derived from the administration of one of the great parochial centres. Henceforward he was to rank as a brother in Christ among men who had acquired name and fame while he was still an Oxford undergraduate. The Church of England has never, perhaps, been more faithfully or more brilliantly served than by the Bishops, Metropolitan and Diocesan, who bore rule when Ernest Wilberforce was appointed to the see of Newcastle. There was a diversity of gifts, no doubt; and brilliant qualities had in some cases to be balanced against a corresponding weakness. But whether for intense spirituality, for eloquence, for statesmanship, for profound scholarship, and for wisdom derived from long experience in parish work it would be hard to match such names as those of Archbishop Tait, of Bishop Harold Browne, of Bishop Magee, of Bishop Fraser, of Bishop Benson, of Bishop Lightfoot, of Bishop Christopher Wordsworth, of Bishop Temple, of Bishop Harvey Goodwin, and, let me add, as in filial duty bound, of Bishop Atlay.

Newcastle being a new see, without a Chapter, no election or *congé d'élire* was necessary, and in the words of a correspondent the Bishop 'became full-plumaged at once.' The consecration took place on July 25, St. James's Day. Samuel Wilberforce had been consecrated Bishop of Oxford in the chapel of Lambeth Palace on November 30, 1845; it is noted in his biography²

¹ 'Ah, how young you look!' was Cardinal Manning's greeting to him on their meeting in the Athenæum shortly after his consecration.

² Vol. i. p. 316.

that never on any occasion had the chapel been so filled ; that fifty clergy attended in their robes and that thirty ladies were present in the gallery. But ' the form of ordaining or consecrating a Bishop ' was now, and had been for years past, dissociated from the cramped accommodation of the Primate's domestic chapel. No ceremony of the kind had ever taken place within the walls of Durham Cathedral, but it was felt that one place and one place only was appropriate for the act ' which was to sever the stately pile that rises above the Wear from its connection with the land of its historic glories. The building that had risen round St. Cuthbert's shrine was to witness the call of a successor to St. Cuthbert whose bishop's stool was not to be above St. Cuthbert's tomb.'¹

The morning sun shone brightly, and the cathedral was densely crowded long before the service commenced. Not even at the enthronement of Bishop Lightfoot had such an enormous mass of people been collected together within its walls. Clergy and laity alike were conscious that they were making history, that they were called as witnesses to a breach with the traditions of the past, that they were present at the beginning of a fresh era in northern churchmanship. The Mayors and Corporations of Durham, Newcastle, and Berwick-on-Tweed, with their civic insignia borne before them, were conducted to their places in the chancel. The sound of the organ was heard, and from the library, where they had robed, a procession of 400 clergy moved along the cloister to the west door and up the centre of the cathedral, with the choir at

¹ *The Consecration and Enthronement of the First Bishop of Newcastle*, p. 11, with introduction by the Rev. Mandell Creighton, from which the quotation is taken.

their head chanting the Psalm 'Let God arise.' The ancient diocese of Durham blended in the march with the new diocese of Newcastle; the province of York was represented by its Archbishop and by the Bishops of Manchester, Liverpool, Carlisle, and Durham, while from the southern province came the late Diocesan of the Bishop-designate, and his well-tried friends the Bishops of Ely and St. Albans.

The Archbishop and the Bishops took up their position within the altar-rails, and the clergy of the cathedral occupied the sedilia. Mattins had already been said and the service began with the Communion Office; the Archbishop of York was the Celebrant, assisted by the Dean of Durham; the Bishop of Durham read the Epistle, and the Bishop of Winchester read the Gospel. The Nicene Creed was said, and then Basil Wilberforce ascended the pulpit. His text was chosen from the 22nd verse of the 20th chapter of St. Matthew:

Jesus answered and said, Are ye able to drink of this cup that I shall drink of, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with? They say unto him, We are able.

Standing within these walls (said the preacher), their very stones awakening the echoes of the Venerable Bede, from whose writings we gather that the work of to-day is rather the resuscitation of an ancient than the creation of a new Bishopric, it would not be difficult to descant upon the memories of the Church in Northumbria, and draw bright auguries for the future from the lives of the sainted predecessors on the Episcopal throne to be filled to-day. But I would crave forbearance, whilst with the utmost simplicity I commend to your loyal co-operation him who is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. . . . Here and now I lay it as a solemn charge upon the laity of Northumberland to gather round their Bishop. Not only support him in

every aggressive effort, missionary or philanthropic, but as he conscientiously responds—as he will conscientiously respond—to the incessant claims of an important diocese, and from pulpit and platform makes his voice heard on the side of God and the people—hold up his hands, strengthen his spirit by the exercise of that mysterious power which no philosopher can explain, and no critic can analyse, but which has proved its reality by a thousandfold demonstration—the power of intercessory prayer. From this day let every family interpolate into their daily household prayers a brief but hearty supplication that God would abundantly send his blessing upon his servant, Ernest Roland, by divine permission, Bishop of Newcastle.

The Festival of St. James was a sad and memorable occasion in the Bishop's family.

There are not a few in this cathedral this morning (continued Basil Wilberforce) who nine years ago this very day stood around that open grave in Lavington Churchyard and saw

The tender shadows falling from the hill
Rest on the greensward where he lieth still,

and now on the ninth anniversary of the very day on which he who under God so largely shaped the destinies of the Church of England was laid to rest, his son is sent forth to follow in his footsteps . . . and he upon whom the hands of solemn consecration are now about to be laid can urge the pathetic plea of Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, and say 'My Father fought for you.'

The ceremony ran its appointed course: the Bishop-designate was presented to the Archbishop of York by the Bishops of Durham and Winchester, the questions were put and answered, the episcopal vestments were donned, and after the imposition of hands the

consecrated Bishop of Newcastle took his seat within the altar-rails, and assisted at the celebration of the Holy Communion which brought the service to a close.

The enthronement in the Church of St. Nicholas, now become the cathedral of the diocese, took place on August 14. From all quarters the laity had gathered in to greet the new Bishop and to bid a reluctant farewell to the old: the Corporations of Newcastle, of Berwick, of Tynemouth, and of Morpeth attended in full state. As the Bishop of Newcastle entered the vestibule, the Lord Lieutenant of the county, the Duke of Northumberland, read a hearty address of welcome, and he was followed by the Vicar of Newcastle¹ on behalf of the clergy. The Bishop of Durham, acting on behalf of the Archbishop of York, discharged his last episcopal function in what had been for over ten centuries an integral portion of his diocese by enthroning his right reverend brother, and inducting him 'into the real, actual and corporal possession of the Bishopric of Newcastle.' It was a day of contending emotions, and as the newly installed Bishop spoke from the pulpit, for the first time, to the people who had been so recently committed to his care he was fully conscious that the circumstances of the service brought no unalloyed joy to the great congregation gathered before him.

It is true (he said) that here is no assembled diocese in tears, gathered to welcome, as best they may, the successor of one dearly loved, whom they have lately laid down to rest in death. Yet in many hearts the feelings are strangely mingled; bitter strives with sweet and sweet with bitter. The division of the diocese of Newcastle from that of Durham has not been—is not now—acceptable to all. There has been sorrow, much

¹ The Rev. Henry Martin, afterwards Archdeacon of Lindisfarne.

and natural sorrow, at the separation from the traditions, the grandeur, the associations that centre in yonder magnificent cathedral, into whose walls the history of the past has gradually been built with loving hands, amid the natural beauties of hill and tree and flowing water. There has been sorrow, much, and, again I say, natural sorrow at separating, as a diocese, from the massive learning, the unfailing courtesy, the deep loving kindness that distinguish so pre-eminently the present occupant of the see of Durham. So that once more, upon a day of jubilee in this busy nineteenth century, are heard those simultaneous yet contrasted sounds that greeted of old the foundation-laying of the restored House of God in the time of Ezra when 'the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people.'

And then, as he had done some nine years earlier in the parish church of Seaforth, he made his profession of faith and duty.

I desire not to speak of myself; yet there are some things which require to be said at such a time as this. It is no small matter to be called upon to undertake the awful office, and to bear this fearful responsibility of a Bishop in the Church of God. It was my lot for many years to be far too intimately acquainted with the inner life of one of England's greatest bishops not to be compelled to say, in the words of one of old, '*ferre non valeo*,' 'I am not able to endure it'; though, recognising the source of the call, with him, too, I am constrained to say '*sed deponere timeo*,' 'yet I dare not lay it aside.' I stand before you, my brethren, pledged alike to the Church of Christ in this land, and to this diocese in particular, by the most solemn of all pledges, to do what in me lies, by the help of my God, for God and His people. I come as the chief pastor of the Diocese, 'seeking not yours, but you!' Recognising to the utmost my own weakness, I yet come 'an Ambassador for Christ,' for 'our sufficiency is of God.' I come to

pronounce no shibboleths, to know no parties, to favour no one set of opinions ; but to feed the flock of Christ, and to preach among you Christ crucified : as an English Churchman, loving dearly the Church in which I live, and in which, when God sends me my call, I mean to die ; to allow what she allows, to forbid what she forbids. Her Prayer Book and her formularies are alike your authority and mine : and that because her Prayer Book aptly mirrors out the word of God, the only final test of doctrine and the infallible guide of souls.

The service in the cathedral was followed by a great luncheon in the Town Hall, over which the Duke of Northumberland presided ; and in the evening a *conversazione* was held for the purpose of presenting addresses of welcome to the Bishop from the Corporations of Newcastle, Tynemouth, and Berwick-on-Tweed, from the Master and Brethren of Trinity House, from the Council of the Church Institute, and from other bodies, lay and ecclesiastical, within the new diocese ; at both functions his downright simplicity of manner, and his power of terse and ready speech created the happiest impression, as he pleaded for the kindly forbearance of his hearers, and quoted the warning which had been given him on his journey northwards, ‘ In the first six months a newly made Bishop can do nothing wrong, in the following six months he can do nothing right.’

CHAPTER IV

BISHOP OF NEWCASTLE—1882-1895

Initial difficulties—The Bishop of Newcastle's Fund—The work accomplished by it—Its conspicuous success—Canon Lloyd brought into the Diocese—The Newcastle Chapter Bill—Canon Creighton—Benwell Tower—St. Nicholas Cathedral—Misrepresentations and misunderstandings.

WHEN Ernest Wilberforce was appointed to Newcastle it was said of him by a not unfriendly critic that ' hitherto his course has been tranquilly upward, now farewell to a quiet life.' Quietude was not exactly the note of his existence either at Seaforth or at Winchester, but all things are comparative, and in the days that were now upon him he must often have looked back to the Close at Winchester and to the Vicarage on the Mersey as havens of calm and peace. It may well be doubted if he had ever realised the full magnitude of the task before him until he was actually engaged in it. Badly furnished, ill-endowed, under-manned, the Church in Northumberland was a bare and inchoate ecclesiastical territory rather than a diocese. . Of organisation there was little, and the thread of what existed had been cut by the severance from Durham. Here and there individual clergy did their work bravely and faithfully, but without cohesion or common purpose. Corporate feeling was hardly known. There was no cathedral

staff, and the Bishop had to select and train his helpers, as it were, under fire. Everything had to be built up from the very ground, and in the meanwhile there had been presented to him a revelation of the spiritual wants of his people along Tyneside which demanded immediate action. Although in the words of a prominent citizen of Newcastle ¹ the Bishop of Durham was scarcely more to them than the Archbishop of York, there was still a feeling of soreness among certain of the clergy and the laity over the division of the diocese. Nonconformity had obtained so strong a grasp upon the middle classes in Newcastle that open and renewed activity among Churchmen was resented as an intrusion ; nor were the ecclesiastical surroundings into which Ernest Wilberforce was plunged of a very sympathetic character: Bishop Baring, to go no further back, was a prelate of very pronounced views and of strong likes and dislikes, and his patronage had been exercised almost exclusively in the interests of a rigid Evangelicalism. In Newcastle, as formerly at Seaforth, the name of Wilberforce was vaguely identified with 'Puseyism.' There was a disposition to watch jealously the lightest words and most trivial actions of the new Bishop, and the judgment of the observers was not always conspicuous for charity.

But there was a reverse side to the shield, as the following letter, from one well acquainted with the old undivided diocese,² is sufficient to show :—

It will indeed be a real satisfaction to the Churchmen of Newcastle to recognise a true Churchman in their chief Pastor, for there has always been there a strong spirit of true Catholic Churchmanship which is

¹ Sir Benjamin Browne.

² The Rev. J. W. Kempe.

traditional in the north. During the seven years in which I was privileged to be associated with that saint upon earth, Dr. Dykes of St. Oswald's, Durham, we had many instances of this; and dear Dykes used to say 'If only we had a good man at St. Nicholas, Newcastle, he would be supported with enthusiasm, and the course of the Church would be one great success.'

In a very short space of time the prediction was verified, but at the outset the Bishop stood almost alone, and he soon had cause to learn in his cathedral city that the steps for the most modest advance in Churchmanship had to be picked very warily. It was unfortunate that he was called upon to vindicate his position before he had had time to show his large-hearted toleration of those who differed from him.

Yet the keen northern air is stimulating to all who are in the pride and strength of manhood. The placid drowsy precincts of the old foundations with their venerable traditions and dignified offices are apt to be suggestive of an age which classed 'enthusiasm' among the minor sins and indiscretions. To an indefatigable worker with high ideals before him difficulties are welcome, and the word 'impossible' is banished from the dictionaries. The creation of the see of Newcastle had been a bold experiment which could only justify itself by the vigorous initiation and successful prosecution of a great revival of faith and works. The Church of England must once more become a living force in Northumberland as it had figured in the pages of Bede, or else the severance from the mother see would be accounted a wanton demonstration of experimental surgery. And at the foot of the Bishop's home in

Benwell Tower, among the courts and alleys of the swarming city, lay a field of labour well calculated to test the missionary zeal of the most devoted servant of Christ.

In the previous autumn a so-called 'religious census' had been carried out by the *Newcastle Chronicle*; and, though such enterprises are by their nature unsatisfactory, the result, after all allowances, was melancholy and startling. It disclosed not only the numerical meagreness of the Church of England congregations, but an actual loss of ground. The population of the town at the general census of the year 1881 had numbered 149,549, and the attendance in Church on the morning of Sunday, October 2, had amounted only to 6441 persons. In 1851, the last year in which religion was recognised in the census papers, the population of Newcastle was given at 87,784, the Church attendance at 7202. 'Thus, whilst in the thirty years the gross number of the population had increased to the extent of 70 per cent., the worshippers in the Church showed an absolute decrease of 761.' We need not accept the figures as a conclusive picture of Church life in Newcastle, but they cannot have been absolutely wide of the mark.

Truly (said the writer) the field is ripe for the harvest and Churchmen may well be excused for indulging the hope that their new chief labourer is endowed with special gifts for the work. We do not doubt (he continued) that Bishop Ernest Wilberforce will meet with a hearty welcome when he comes to his diocese, and we trust that all possible means will be placed at his disposal for accomplishing the task that he doubtless sets before himself.

Such an invitation, coming from the leading Liberal

newspaper in the north, was equivalent to a challenge, and the Bishop was not slow to respond. On January 26, 1883, he appointed a Commission of clergy and laymen 'to inquire and examine into the spiritual wants and requirements of the several parishes on the north side of the river Tyne, both with regard to the supply of clergy and the Church accommodation.' The work of the Commissioners, who included in their number the Mayor of Newcastle and the two Archdeacons, was thorough and rapid. A list of questions was issued to the incumbents and churchwardens of each parish within the scheduled area; the parishes themselves were divided into four sections, each of which was entrusted to a committee composed of such members of the Commission as were known to possess local knowledge, and the report of each committee was afterwards submitted to the whole body of the Commissioners. In November of the same year the result of their inquiry was presented to the Bishop and was by him communicated to the Press and the diocese. The Commissioners began by reporting that the district inquired into embraced an area of 59,371 acres, with a population of 285,000 souls, for whose pastoral care 74 clergymen of the Church of England were provided, assisted by 16 paid or licensed lay helpers, with 44 churches and 33 mission rooms, together affording accommodation to 31,774 persons. The amount of Church accommodation was found to vary very greatly in different parishes, falling in some below 4 per cent. of the parishioners. They were convinced that the most urgent need was a large increase in the number of clergy labouring in the great centre of population, and that in view of the regulations of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, from whom liberal assistance was anticipated, such

increase would be best obtained by the formation of new and independent parishes. They recommended accordingly

(1) That twelve new parishes be formed as soon as possible at an estimated cost of £66,000, which was the sum required for purchasing sites and erecting churches, which should be free and open.

(2) That fourteen additional mission rooms should also be forthwith provided at a cost of £8400.

(3) That seventeen additional clergy be employed in certain of the most populous parishes, involving an annual outlay of £2000 or thereabouts, over and above what might be received from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the several Church Societies in the shape of grants.

With regard to the funds required to carry out their recommendations, it was anticipated that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners would undertake the permanent endowment of the new parishes. 'But,' continued the report,

in the work of building churches and providing the requisite mission rooms your Lordship must rely upon the liberality of those who desire the moral and religious welfare of their fellow countrymen; and considering the peculiar claims of the district, we do not doubt that an appeal from you for help will meet with a liberal response, not only within the limits of your own diocese but throughout the Church at large. The accomplishment of a work so extensive and so thorough as the one we venture to recommend to your Lordship must necessarily occupy some years and demand strenuous exertion; but a signal blessing having rested upon the efforts to found the See of which, under God's good providence, you are the first Bishop, we earnestly hope that Almighty God will crown your efforts with success in thus endeavouring to grapple

with the spiritual necessities of the most populous part of your Lordship's Diocese.

Thus informed and fortified by the eight months' labour of hard-headed men of business, little inclined to be emotional in their arithmetic, the Bishop struck promptly. He issued an appeal to the diocese in which he boldly asked for £100,000, to be expended partly on the erection of churches, mission rooms, and parochial agencies in the shape of missionaries and curates. Subscriptions might be spread over a term of four years, and might either be given to the general fund or earmarked for any particular object or locality embraced by it. Early in November two public meetings were held in the Assembly Rooms and in the Town Hall of Newcastle, on the afternoon and evening of the same day. At both of them the Bishop of the diocese presided, and in the evening Bishop Lightfoot reminded the crowded gathering how in the old days he had always told them that when Newcastle got a Bishop of her own, and not until then, would the question of Church extension on Tyneside be squarely faced. The Report of the Commissioners was unanimously adopted at both meetings, and they were appointed a Committee to carry out their own recommendations. The suggestion that the Fund should be known as 'The Bishop of Newcastle's Fund' was received with enthusiasm.

The scheme was now actually launched, but, when the glamour of the public meetings and the eloquence of the speakers had died away, the cold fit succeeded. There was a strong current of adverse opinion that the project was far too ambitious, and that a more modest programme would have had an infinitely better chance of success. It was freely asserted that the majority

of the Commissioners held this view themselves and had only yielded to the urgent entreaties of the Bishop. There were limits, so it was contended, to the resources of the churchmen in the diocese, on whose pockets so large an inroad had been recently made in connection with the foundation of the see. Many had responded out of all proportion to their means, and now they were called upon to provide a capital sum of £100,000, beside £2000 a year in perpetuity. It could not be denied that there was a great deal of truth in those objections.

A less resolute spirit than the Bishop (writes Archdeacon Henderson) might have been daunted by the reception which his scheme met with in certain quarters, especially when, as was also pointed out, the trade on Tyneside was once more in a very depressed condition. The 'Bishop of Newcastle's Fund,' however, received the munificent support of His Grace the Duke of Northumberland,¹ and its success was never for a moment in doubt. It ran its five years' course, and another five years was added during which certain subscribers continued their donations on a smaller scale; and at the end of the ten years the sum of money raised by the Fund amounted to £107,280. Taking into account the circumstances of the diocese and the time at which that appeal was made, it must be regarded as a very remarkable success. The works accomplished by the Fund may be summarised as follows:—

New churches	11
New mission chapels	19
Additional clergy	28
New parish buildings	14
New parishes formed	11
Vicarage houses	7

An additional sitting accommodation in churches and chapels of 9612 seats was thus provided.

¹ The Duke led the way with a donation of £8000.

This was the tangible result of the 'Bishop of Newcastle's Fund,' but it by no means represents the whole of the expenditure on Church extension in Northumberland during the Episcopate of Bishop Wilberforce. The 'Bishop's Fund' dealt only with Newcastle and the Tyneside. All over the diocese, in the towns and in the country districts, a similar work, in some cases inspired, and always encouraged and helped, by him, was being carried on without cessation. The total sum raised for ecclesiastical purposes during the first five years of the life of the Newcastle Bishopric fell little short of a quarter of a million sterling—to be precise, £244,189.

The 'sturdy beggar' is not always a popular character, and the process of conjuring money out of the pocket of even the cheerful giver is to many a most distasteful occupation. In Ernest Wilberforce an irresistible driving power was united to a genial persistency and a happy faculty of persuasion. To give a single instance of the result of his advocacy and energy, he received one morning, in his second year at Newcastle, a letter from Mr. Percy Westmacott, a gentleman to whom he had made no special individual appeal, and a cheque for £5000, with the request that £4000 should be directed to a new reredos for the cathedral and the remainder to whatever church in the city he might deem to be most in need of assistance. But there is no form of labour more exhausting to head and hand than that of building up a huge subscription list, especially when the more secular methods of modern 'Charity' are taboo. 'The Bishop's Fund,' with its constant anxieties, and with the enormous mass of correspondence it entailed, was no light drain upon the physical forces of

the originator,¹ and anything short of complete success would have been disaster. The triumph was largely due to his own personality, to his high courage, and to his unswerving faith; and the service which he thus rendered to the newly created diocese, at the most critical moment in its career, and in circumstances of peculiar difficulty, was one the value of which it would be impossible to exaggerate. The foundations upon which those who followed him were to build had been well and truly laid from the very beginning.

Scarcely less decisive in its influence on the fortunes of the diocese was his first appointment to the cathedral Church of St. Nicholas. This preferment, by far the most important in the Bishop's gift, was held at the date of the creation of the see by Canon Henry John Martin, an excellent and highly esteemed clergyman of the Low Church School, who had done much good work in the parish, particularly in the restoration of the fabric of St Nicholas. One of the Bishop's first acts was to promote him to the Archdeaconry of Lindisfarne, vacated on the transfer of Archdeacon Hamilton to that of Northumberland.² The duty of finding a successor to assume charge of the mother church of the diocese was a grave responsibility, but it caused the Bishop little or no anxiety. At the risk of hurting local susceptibilities he at once selected his friend,

¹ Such a thing as a secretary either lay or clerical was unknown at Benwell; Mrs. Wilberforce continued to make time in her own busy life to act as occasional amanuensis, and later on the elder daughters assisted in the same capacity. The Bishop loved to answer his letters with the least possible delay, and money, however small the amount, was invariably acknowledged by return of post.

² The Archdeaconry of Lindisfarne was held in conjunction with the Vicarage of Eglington; though preserving the name of the original see of Northumbria, it had been created as recently as 1842. To the Archdeaconry of Northumberland was attached a residentiary stall at Durham, an unprofitable arrangement to both of the dioceses concerned.

the Rev. Arthur Thomas Lloyd, Vicar of Aylesbury. The choice was singularly wise and happy : the influence exercised by the new Vicar of St. Nicholas was second only to that of the Bishop himself, and it more than justified the prediction to which reference has been made on a previous page.¹ The appointment was followed by a revival of Church feeling such as the most sanguine had scarcely dared to anticipate, and for which the best parallel is to be found in the history of Leeds under Dr. Hook. At the same time it gave the Bishop a trusty counsellor and an invaluable helper in the many diocesan organisations in which he was immersed. The Vicar of St. Nicholas became from the hour of his appointment the Bishop's right-hand man, and the latter was often heard to say that if he never did anything for the diocese he would live in its annals as the man who brought Canon Lloyd to Newcastle.

Canon Lloyd came regularly to luncheon on Saturdays (writes a member of the Bishop's family), to the great delight of all, for he was loved as their dearest friend by young and old, the children always meeting him at the door in the lane and bringing him in triumph up the garden and leaving him only at the study door, where more serious subjects had to be discussed by the two friends.

This most happy partnership was destined to endure unbroken until Lloyd was made Suffragan Bishop of Thetford only a year before Wilberforce's translation to Chichester. He returned to Newcastle as its Diocesan in 1903, and his death four years later was an irreparable loss to his own diocese and to the northern province.²

¹ *Supra*, p. 109.

² *Infra*, p. 338.

As Vicar of St. Nicholas' Cathedral, Canon Lloyd occupied a position analogous to that of the Dean on the older foundations; and very brief experience served to convince the Bishop that the creation of a regularly organised capitular body was essential if the cathedral was to exert its proper influence as the centre of worship, the *ὁμολογία* of the diocese. With this object he prepared the Newcastle Chapter Bill; and thanks to the good offices of Mr. Gladstone, he succeeded in getting it pushed through all stages in both Houses during the session of 1884¹—no small feat considering the strong animosity with which legislation in the direction of Church reform was regarded by a section of the Liberal party. The Act provided for the establishment of a dean and residentiary canon whenever funds sufficient for the purpose should have been provided by private generosity; for the framing of Statutes for the Chapter when constituted; and for the immediate creation of a body of honorary canons. As far back as 1852 it had been pointed out to the Cathedral Commissioners that the 'plot of ground upon which the Vicarage of St. Nicholas stands is large enough to contain residences for the dean and two prebendaries,' and the memorialists went so far as to draw up a scheme for the constitution and functions of a cathedral body. There were to be four prebendaries, three of whom would be endowed out of the town livings, while the fourth was to act as Professor of Pastoral Theology without cure of souls. There were to be three minor canons, 'of whom one shall be precentor and afternoon lecturer with a higher stipend,

¹ 47 & 48 Vict. c. 43. The sponsor of the Bill in the House of Lords, to a seat in which the Bishop of Newcastle had not yet succeeded, was the Bishop of Durham. See Hansard, ccxxii. 1541.

and one librarian, the second and third to officiate as curates of St. Nicholas.' There was further provision for the eventual transfer of the emoluments of a canonry in Durham to the Cathedral of Newcastle which would save the Archdeacon of Northumberland from being dependent for stipend and residence on a diocese other than his own,¹ and for the vesting in the hands of the Bishop of some further ecclesiastical patronage in the Newcastle diocese. The Act marked the opening up of a great enterprise, the levelling of the distinction between the new sees and the old. But it was obvious that it must be a matter of considerable time before complete achievement could be reasonably expected. The honorary canons were indeed appointed before the Bill became law ; but Bishop Wilberforce had been translated to his southern diocese before the modest endowment had been raised which now permits the existence of four canons residentiary, while the Deanery of Newcastle has still to be provided for. The office of honorary canon was, however, the first step towards bringing the clergy of the diocese into closer touch with their cathedral, and also an opportunity for conferring brevet rank on some of those who had thrown themselves most earnestly into the strenuous work of foundation and construction. Foremost among them is the name of the Rev. Mandell Creighton, Vicar of Embleton, who was hiding in a country parish the gifts which ere long were to find exercise in the sees of Peterborough and London. The combination in Creighton of wide scholarship and culture with a positive genius for business and routine was promptly recognised by his new Diocesan, who made him at once his examining

¹ *Vide infra*, p. 136 *n.*

chaplain. Creighton took a leading part in the organisation of the various Church Societies and in the preparation of the Diocesan Calendar, and he acted as joint secretary of the first Diocesan Conference. The Bishop consulted him on the most confidential matters, and has recorded his high sense of Creighton's never-failing tact and energy. 'All went so smoothly and quietly,' he wrote.¹ 'He was always there when wanted for anything. His sympathies were always with the people.' How fully the regard was reciprocated is shown by his letter to the Bishop on his appointment to the Dixie Professorship at Cambridge.²

MY LORD,—Thank you very much for your kind expressions towards me. I sorrow much at the thought of leaving Northumberland, and very much at the thought of leaving *you*. I may now say without presumption that I have learned much from you and have looked with admiration on qualities in which I know myself to be deficient. You have shown me, above all things, how great a gift it is to speak out straightforwardly even where it may not be pleasing at the time, and how this may be done in such a manner as to leave nothing but a feeling of respect behind. I may add, because I think you would not be sorry to know it, that this is always the thing that strikes everyone. The general judgment is 'The Bishop knows his own mind and we know what he means.' I think this is a great testimony to the effect which your character is producing.³

¹ *Life of Bishop Creighton*, ii. 243.

² This has already been printed (*Life of Creighton*, ii. 246), but I venture to quote it here again as a felicitous appreciation from personal knowledge.

³ A Northumberland layman, Mr. Howard Pease of Otterburn Tower, who knew them both well, has provided me with a curious illustration of a point of contrast between Wilberforce and Creighton. 'If Bishop Wilberforce read a novel in the evening out in Norway, of the tone of which he disapproved, he would fling it across the room in his wrath. Bishop Creighton, on the other hand, on a holiday, might have a tale of Balzac in his handbag, and be found enjoying the very novel the other was

On leaving Embleton, Creighton continued, at the Bishop's request, to act as examining chaplain until his appointment to a residentiary stall at Worcester : and in this work he was associated with his friend and fellow-historian, the Rev. W. Dixon, Vicar of Warkworth. Dixon's deep learning, his labours on the history of the Reformation, his vein of poetry, not unfrequently of exquisite quality, had hitherto brought small recognition from his ecclesiastical superiors, and unhappily it was not in the Bishop's power to reward him more substantially than by the honorary offices of canon and rural dean.¹ But he was able at least to drag him from obscurity, and to utilise his talents in the practical work of the Church. Dixon's letters to his diocesan abound in expressions of affection and gratitude. The influence of two such men as Creighton and Dixon had no small effect on the standard enforced upon the ordination candidates, and no Bishop in either province was better served.

And in this place something may be said of the material surroundings amid which the Bishop of Newcastle carried on his work.

Benwell Tower (writes one of his family) is a big castellated house, standing 250 feet above sea-level, approached by a drive between high banks and overhanging trees to which the nesting rooks return every

physically punishing.² Here you have two types of Bishops—the straightforward, sturdy, simple, and vigorous kind, with the wind about his skirts ; and the subtle, intellectual type from whom nothing human was aloof.'

¹ Mr. Robert Bridges, in the sketch of Dixon's life prefaced to a recently published volume of selections from his poems, seems to complain that his services were not better rewarded by his Diocesan. The writer can hardly have realised how very small was the share of patronage left to the Bishop of Newcastle on the partition of the old see of Durham. All the canonries, as we have seen, were honorary, and as a matter of fact Warkworth was one of the best livings in his gift.

spring with much noise and chatter. The back and oldest part is long and low, and the higher and front part had been added later. Tradition says that from the tower which lends a name to the house, the turrets and pinnacles of Durham Cathedral are visible in clear weather on the southern horizon. The reception rooms were commodious and lofty; on one side of the square entrance hall was the drawing-room, on the other the dining-room, both admirably adapted for entertaining. The former of these faced east with a more than ample allowance of windows and outer wall; the Bishop had a horror of hot rooms and loved fresh air and open windows, no matter what the temperature outside might be. In winter and spring there was no disguising the fact that the house, all over, was bitterly cold, and the hot-water pipes introduced by his successor were a concession to human weakness to which Bishop Wilberforce never stooped. A great deal of the furniture in the dining-room and library had been presented to the see, massive book-cases, heavy substantial chairs, which had a disconcerting habit of tipping backwards when unwary guests sprang up to grace. A finely carved sideboard reached nearly to the ceiling, with cupboards at the top from which the children were encouraged to jump into their father's arms—a perilous undertaking, some thought, but the strong arms were never known to drop their burden. Indeed to us children it seemed that the diocesan gift was especially contrived to meet our requirements; the big oak chairs and the sofa with their pig-skin coverings made capital 'homes,' and the Bishop loved to have his children about him at every possible opportunity; he could go on with his letters calmly and undistractedly while they played or raced round the room.

The house stood in extensive grounds, and there were big lawns available for croquet and tennis, while a convenient back wall gave opportunity for 'squash' racquets. But when the wind blew from its favourite quarter, the east, the garden was no place for sauntering or sitting out; and when the breezes were comparatively



Photo by Gullirie, Deauville.

BENWELL TOWER, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

'soft and low,' the murky smoke that rose from Newcastle and the Tyneside obscured the rays of the summer sun and robbed the garden of much of its charm and brightness. An old vault and an arch embedded in the wall were reminders of the time long gone by when the spot had served as a burial ground for the Church of St. John in Newcastle; and in the garden, too, was the well from which, by local tradition, the house took its name, *Ben-well*, the well on the wall, for the old Roman road ran a few hundred yards to the north of the tower.¹

The Bishop with his great love of exercise hardly ever drove in or out of Newcastle except after a late evening meeting. Wet or fine he preferred to walk, and his racing stride made nothing of the long uphill pull which lasted from the City almost to his door. Guests who were invited or who volunteered to accompany him found their powers taxed to the utmost if they were to keep up with him, and not unfrequently when they reached their destination they discovered that they had had quite as much if not more than they cared for. In holiday time, after they had left the schoolroom, the children would often join their father in the walk, and a former editor of the *Newcastle Chronicle* once spoke seriously to the Bishop about taking the small legs at such a pace up the hill.

¹ That learned antiquary, the present Bishop of Bristol, wrote the following letter to his host after a visit to Benwell Tower for the meeting of the British Association in June 1890. 'Scott in the *Antiquary* spells Benwell, "Benval." I cannot help thinking that the connection of the word with the name of the eastern end of the wall from the Clyde to the Forth is too marked to be disregarded. The Pictish name was Pen-fahel, and the other native name was Pen-quawl—*quawl*, *fahel*, and *val* being the various phonetic spellings of their way of pronouncing the Roman *vallum*. The Scots put a hard c where the Picts and Welsh put p, and thus *Pen* or *Ben*, and *kin* are the same prefix. The modern name of Penfahel is Kinell, and that is the same word as Benell. Bede tells that the Anglians called Penfahel in his time Penel, which again is the same word as Kinell and Benell. In each case the f or v is dropped, as I understand the v is in Benwell among the country people. As a matter of philology I should think the identity of your Benwell with the northern Kinell or Kinnell is clear. But history may of course show that Benwell has another derivation.'

It may be added that ' the Tower ' when handed over did not contain a chapel. This deficiency was remedied by the Bishop during the first year of his Episcopate. A number of ladies, friends of Mrs. Wilberforce, presented the reredos, a very beautiful example of Kempe's workmanship, as a Christmas offering in December 1886. The side panels which completed the sanctuary were the gift of clergy whom the Bishop had ordained. The finely carved oak fittings throughout the chapel were given as a memorial of Mrs. Wilberforce's father by friends from far and near. The organ was provided by a subscription among the clergy of the diocese. At the dedication of the chapel on Dec. 6, 1887, the sermon was preached by the late Bishop King of Lincoln.

A memorial printed by the Cathedral Commissioners of 1852 in their final report ¹ had urged as one of the arguments for the Newcastle Bishopric that ' the parish Church of St. Nicholas will be found by its capacious cruciform shape with its nave, choir, transept, and their aisles, sufficiently imposing for a Cathedral.' But in spite of its advancement in dignity the Cathedral of St. Nicholas remained and still remains an unmistakeable parish church of the type familiar to the north of England, plain and severe externally but graced with a noble fifteenth-century tower. A church had stood on the site since the reign of William Rufus, but no part of the existing structure was earlier than the reign of Edward III. Time and change, the Puritan and the Restorer, had wrought sad havoc among its fittings and decorations, but the worst outrages in the shape of restoration had been remedied as recently as the year 1877 by the skilful hands of Sir Gilbert Scott. He had opened out the church from east to west, swept away

¹ P. xli.; *vide supra*, pp. 84, 118.

the high pews from the choir and aisles, and removed a monstrosity in the shape of a singing gallery, which completely cut off the nave from the chancel. Much still remained to be done, however, before St. Nicholas could be regarded as a fitting mother church for the county of Northumberland. And in no respect were the consequences of the erection of the see more notable than in the zeal and generosity displayed in what was practically a new restoration. What had hitherto been the private concern of the good citizens of Newcastle was now a matter of pride and emulation to the whole body of Church people in the diocese. They

Spared neither gold nor gear,
Nor hewen wood, nor precious stone,

in their resolve to render the cathedral a worthy monument of northern piety. It may be said without exaggeration that not a year passed during Bishop Wilberforce's episcopate without some addition being made to the fabric, some beautiful ornament being consecrated to the glory of God. Many of the handsomest gifts were made anonymously, others were the result of subscriptions; and the glorious peal of bells which was solemnly dedicated on Whitsun Tuesday, 1892, was the joint gift of the Mayor, Sheriff, and Corporation of Newcastle, of the Vicar and his wardens, and of a prominent Newcastle citizen, Mr. John Hall. Nor is it in any way derogatory to the large-hearted donors if it be added that the personal regard in which the Bishop was held proved no small stimulus to the various benefactions.

On the old foundations the Bishop of the diocese has no power outside the 'throne' in his own cathedral, save on the rare occasions when he intervenes

as Visitor. The Dean is omnipotent, and sometimes, if I may venture to say so, a little touchy where his prerogative is concerned. But in deanless Newcastle the care of the fabric devolved largely upon the Bishop, and thanks to the ideal relationship maintained between him and the successive Vicars, Canon Lloyd and Canon Gough, he may well have been content that the provisions of the Newcastle Chapter Act were so long in taking effect. Nor amongst those who rendered him constant and loyal assistance, not only in his early days as a Bishop, but throughout the whole of his time at Newcastle, should omission be made of the Ven. George Hans Hamilton, who had been ordained in the old Durham diocese as far back as 1846, who had held the important vicarage of Berwick-on-Tweed, and had been appointed to the Archdeaconry of Lindisfarne in 1865, an office which he exchanged for that of Northumberland in 1882. No man living had a wider knowledge of the Church in that county, and the fruits of his long service in social and educational work were placed ungrudgingly at the disposal of his Diocesan.

The first anniversary of the consecration of the Bishop of Newcastle, the first birthday of the see, was made the occasion for a quiet but significant demonstration of the hold which Ernest Wilberforce had already made good among the people of the north. On the Festival of St. James he was presented at a meeting in the Council Chamber of Newcastle Town Hall with a pastoral staff of carved ivory with silver gilt mountings. The Bishopric of Newcastle, as a journalist of the day remarked, had not been 'created for ornamental or ceremonial purposes.' But Northumberland was determined that its Bishop should not be left without that visible ensign

of authority, care, and correction which was now so general a part of the episcopal equipment. Sixty-two clergymen and a hundred and sixty laymen had been subscribers to the gift, and the formal presentation was made by the Hon. the Rev. Francis Canon Grey, perhaps the most venerable and best beloved amongst the Northumbrian clergy, who had been appointed by the Bishop as one of his chaplains, and who, together with Canon Creighton, had been the moving spirit in the restoration of an ancient custom which dated back to the earliest days of the Saxon Church. 'If our Queen has her sceptre,' he said, 'if civil magistrates such as the worshipful Mayor of this city have their maces as the ensign of their authority, surely it is hardly fitting that our chief spiritual and ecclesiastical ruler should be without some corresponding symbol of his office and jurisdiction.' Colonel Osbaldiston Mitford, who spoke on behalf of the laity, recalled the days of anxiety and trepidation in Northumberland which followed immediately upon the separation from Durham, 'Fortunately the choice fell upon one who set aside all their fears.' The Episcopal ring presented to Wilberforce at his consecration had been the gift of his old fellow-workers among the Liverpool clergy, the staff was a happy pledge of affection and esteem on the part of those into whose midst he had come a short twelve months earlier, a stranger and unknown.

But the early days of the Episcopate were not free from troubles which caused the Bishop much anxiety and no small pain. During the whole of his public life it had been his earnest desire to maintain harmonious and friendly relations with the ministers and members of the various Nonconformist bodies. He had been brought into close touch with many of them in the

course of temperance work, and had learnt to place a high value on the zeal and devotion of those who failed to see eye to eye with him in some of the cardinal points of faith and doctrine. He was essentially broad-minded in his dealings with men of all schools of thought both within and without the Church of England, and long before he left the north his absolute fairness and toleration were acknowledged on all sides. But in Newcastle he found a sensitiveness on the part of Non-conformity for which he was quite unprepared. The offer to give a prize for knowledge of the Prayer Book to the boys of the Grammar School raised a perfect storm in the Press. As I have already indicated, the revival of Church life and feeling was regarded as an attempt to reassert claims which had long been dormant and were in many quarters supposed to have been abandoned. An amount of reticence and self-effacement was required of Churchmen which had an almost ludicrous side.

It was considered perfectly fair (writes one who stood by the Bishop's side in the struggle)¹ for a person to entertain objections against the Church so strongly as to warrant separation from it, but it was regarded as the height of bigotry for a Churchman not to acquiesce when such objections were expressed in his presence. People might object to the Church and leave it, but it was not permitted to a Churchman even to hint that in his opinion they were wrong in so doing.

The Bishop was the last person in the world to adopt such an attitude of humble submission; to him Truth was Truth, and Error was Error, and he never shrank from saying so, without respect of persons. His staunch Churchmanship was engrained in him, and he

¹ Archdeacon Henderson.

was not the man to abandon without a struggle one jot or tittle of the Church's claims, whether spiritual or temporal. Within a very short period after his consecration he found himself called upon to assert in strong terms the claims of the Church to proper representation on the governing body of the Newcastle Grammar School, and to fight the battle practically single-handed. His action exposed him to a good deal of unpleasant comment in the columns of the Newcastle Press, and it certainly made an unpromising beginning. Later on a dispute arose over the religious instruction to be given to the boys of the Wellesley Training Ship, stationed at the mouth of the Tyne. The Bishop in forcible language urged the right of those boys who came from Church of England homes to 'distinctive Church teaching' on board and on shore. The controversy was rapidly embarrassed by various side issues, and he was compelled to defend himself at the meeting of the Governors against some rather personal attacks: one of the speakers who followed the Bishop accused him of a desire to plunge them into 'narrow-minded medievalism,' and said he was glad to find on reference to the calendar that they were still in April 1891, not April 1691. 'Yes,' retorted the Bishop, 'and not far from the first of the month.'

It may be conceded that the Bishop was sometimes betrayed into rashness of speech which only encouraged his assailants to fresh exertions. He felt deeply the personal and rancorous tone adopted towards him,¹ but he was consoled by the knowledge that his championship of the cause he felt to be right was

¹ Of one of his bitterest critics he remarked in a letter to a third person that 'the only resemblance I detect between his charity and that of St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians is that it "believeth all things."'

rallying round him the latent forces of Northumbrian Churchmanship.

Please do remember (wrote one of the curates of Berwick-on-Tweed ¹ to Mrs. Wilberforce) that altho' we live in cold regions we have warm hearts and are loyal to his Lordship to a man, and also that a distinction should be made between Novocastrians and Northumbrians, who are *two* people of totally different habits and instincts. So when one of the former gets up and says rash, unkind and untrue things, perhaps it may be a little grain of comfort to know that we feel it is our battle also that the Bishop is fighting, and that his cause is ours and that he has our full sympathy and prayers.

And when, later on, an especially spiteful attack in a local newspaper ² had caused much pain and annoyance to Mrs. Wilberforce, Sir Benjamin Browne wrote to assure her that

the article will no more hurt the Bishop than if they accused him of cannibalism. Of course there will be difference of opinion as to his (or any other Bishop's) Church views, and the question of Church and Dissent will now and again cause those high in authority to be attacked. The Church is gaining ground every year, and this must make its enemies very bitter, and this bitterness will possibly, now and again, find its vent in scurrilous and abusive language. But I do not think such writing, if repeated every day, could in the faintest degree injure either the Bishop, his work, or the Church.

A further source of friction, happily of short duration, arose out of a passage in the Report which led to the establishment of the Bishop of Newcastle's Fund.

¹ The Rev. Edward Arkless.

² Not the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*; by a most fortunate chance the Bishop never saw the article in question, though it figured in large characters on the contents bill.

A complaint was widely circulated before the terms of that instrument were fully known that the Commissioners had ignored the existence and labours of the various Nonconformist bodies in the areas under consideration. The actual words of the Report as printed were sufficiently explicit to clear up any misunderstanding. 'In estimating the spiritual wants of the district,' so ran one of the paragraphs, 'we have not lost sight of the provision made by other religious bodies, but we have nevertheless thought it right to take the entire population as the basis of our calculation.' To have made anything like an accurate computation of the work done by Dissent would have prolonged the Commission far beyond the eight months of its labours, and would most probably have been regarded in many, if not in all, quarters, as an unwarrantable inquisition. Nor could the National Church on such an occasion admit that any part of its responsibilities was removed by the action of those who had separated themselves from its Communion. It was her duty, as it was the duty of no other religious body in the land, to look after the lost as well as the found. But both the Bishop and the Commissioners were emphatic in disclaiming any intention to slight or disparage the work of other Christian bodies, and the former took constant occasion of referring to the debt under which the Nonconformists in his diocese had placed the whole community. But for them, he more than once protested, there were corners of his diocese in which Christianity would have been nothing but a name.

The Report of the Commissioners, however, had revealed the uncontrovertible fact that Nonconformist ministers are bound to follow their congregations, and that in the great majority of cases the strength of

Nonconformity lay in a prosperous middle class, who migrated steadily from the purely industrial districts to the broad thoroughfares and airy suburbs. As was pointed out in a Newcastle paper,

the teeming populations of Elswick, Shieldfield and Byker are certainly not overrun with chapels any more than with churches. The Baptists and Independents are not to be found in any one of these neighbourhoods; the Presbyterians are very slenderly represented, and the principal Wesleyan chapels are all in other parts of the city.

This was not peculiar to Newcastle or to any great town, and in a speech on behalf of the Church Extension Fund, Bishop Lightfoot declared that in Sunderland alone, during the first five years of his Episcopate, four dissenting chapels which had been abandoned by the bodies to which they belonged had been purchased by the Church of England and were then being used for her services. The fact, however, was none the more palatable for being true, and there was a strong inclination among those who were on the outlook for grievances to raise a hue and cry. Bishop Wilberforce's answer was given partly in words of explanation and appreciation, but even more emphatically in deeds. His friendliness with Nonconformists in private, his hearty public co-operation with them whenever they met on a common platform, his vigorous acknowledgment of their good work and devotion were a practical retort to would-be mischief-makers. Among his closest intimates were Mr. Pease of Pendower, the former owner of Benwell Tower, and Dr. Thomas Hodgkin, the historian, two leading members of the Society of Friends. The Rev. Charles Garrett, whom he had known well at Liverpool, was his guest when visiting Newcastle as President of the

Wesleyan Conference. And when twelve years later the call to Chichester removed him from his Northumbrian neighbours there was no English Bishop for whom Nonconformists cherished a more kindly feeling than Ernest Wilberforce.

CHAPTER VI

BISHOP OF NEWCASTLE—1882-1895 (*continued*)

The first Diocesan Conference—Wilberforce as a chairman—His opening address—Primary visitation—The charge—Daily service—Evening communion—Confirmation statistics—The Church in Northumberland under Bishop Shute Barrington.

ON September 25, 1885, the Bishop of Newcastle held his first Diocesan Conference. It was a notable occasion, the first visible sign of union among the Churchmen of Northumberland and of the strength which union alone can give. These Conferences, which have now become part of the regular organisation of every English and Welsh diocese, were then an innovation, distrusted by many excellent persons who had an inborn dislike for anything they thought 'new-fangled,' and regarded 'with a scornful wonder' by those who resented any signs of reviving corporate life in the Church of England. There were many nice points of detail to be mastered, many problems as to representation and constitution to be solved; but the Bishop, thanks to his strong commonsense and capacity for detail, together with the invaluable assistance of Canon Creighton, overcame all difficulties. He was supported on the platform and in the hall by a phalanx which included almost every clergyman of note in the diocese, and by a remarkable body of the leading laymen. Foremost

among these were the late Duke of Northumberland ; the present Duke, then Earl Percy, M.P. ; the Earl of Tankerville ; the late Sir Charles Trevelyan, and the Mayor of Newcastle (Mr. T. G. Gibson). Earl Percy and Sir Charles Trevelyan took an active part in the proceedings, as did Mr. C. P. Bosanquet, Mr. Benjamin Noble, and Councillor (now Sir Benjamin) Browne. It is a commonplace that the success of any public assembly, whatever its composition or its object, is made or marred by its chairman, and as the Bishop of Newcastle came forward to deliver his Presidential address there must have been curiosity blended with anxiety as to how he would acquit himself. From the first sentence to the last the President had his audience under his hand. Ernest Wilberforce was an ideal chairman ; he managed a meeting as in old days he used to manage a horse ; he knew when to be eloquent and when to be business-like, and he had already acquired a shrewd knowledge of the north-countrymen amongst whom his lot was cast.

We meet in conference this year (he began) under circumstances that can never be quite the same again. For to-day we meet for the first time formally as a diocese, re-established rather than new, and now separated from that of Durham within whose boundaries, may I not say in whose bosom, we have been so long included. A re-established diocese, with memories of greatness in the past, challenging our best energies in the present, with long and ennobling traditions upholding our hands—a diocese lacking indeed, as yet, in some of the completeness, in much of the wealth, and in many of the endowments that distinguish and enrich some of our sisters—and yet a diocese which, from the warm hearts and strong heads and resolute energetic lives that so pre-eminently characterise Northumbria,

possesses already the promise—and, while it is true to its God, I cannot doubt God shall have granted it the potency—of hereafter writing upon the pages of history the record of no mean attempt to carry home the Saviour's name to human hearts; to lift into the joy and peace of believing the weary, the uncertain, the crushed, the sinful; and to establish deeply in the affections of His people that Church which Christ gave His blood to found.

Turning to the business immediately before the Conference, the Bishop suggested the appointment of a committee to report upon the tentative constitution under which it had been summoned and to consider any desirable and practicable modifications. He outlined the provisions of the 'Newcastle Chapter' Bill, and he drew attention to an unwelcome clause in the Act under which the see of Newcastle had been founded. The 8th section of Vict. 41 & 42, c. 68, provided for the eventual repayment to the diocese of Durham of the sum of £1000 per annum which had been transferred from the revenues of that see to the Bishopric of Newcastle.¹

Our neighbour across the Tyne (he said) will hardly expect or even wish us to turn our attention to this matter, until we have been able to do something to satisfy the crying needs, and to remedy the almost starvation in matters spiritual that exist at present in far too many parts of our own more slenderly endowed

¹ 'The endowment fund of a new Bishopric under this Act shall be held by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners upon the trusts following, that is to say, upon trust to provide a net annual income not exceeding £4200 a year, and a fitting residence for the Bishop, and subject as aforesaid to make good to the contributory Bishopric the portion of the income or endowment of that Bishopric directed by the Act to be transferred to the new Bishopric, and subject as aforesaid upon trust for the foundation of a Dean and Chapter for the Bishopric.'

diocese, until the alterations necessary to erect St. Nicholas into a cathedral are complete, and our Dean and Residentiary Canons are endowed.

It seemed a piece of extravagant optimism to talk of future endowment when the foe was already knocking at the gate. The agitation for Disestablishment was being pressed hard in Parliament, and Wilberforce, a Liberal in general politics and owing his appointment to a Liberal Prime Minister, thought it right and necessary to define his own position.

It behoves those who love the Church of England, those who believe in her mission to this country from God, to be up and doing, to remove whatever blots may be found to exist in her system, and to reform abuses wherever they may be discerned, to prove her present value to the nation less by argument than by beneficent spiritual work done throughout the land ; to show that her message is to the people of England, that she speaks in the same words to rich and poor alike ; to demonstrate practically that she has the power to reach hearts, and, by the message of her Master, to alleviate sorrows alike in the palace and the cottage ; that she is true to herself only when she is true to her God ; that she has care for the orphan and the outcast, the desolate, the heedless, the sinful ; that her one real aim and object, however far she may at present fall short of her standard, is so to train the young and deal with the grown committed to her charge, that each may find his place beneath the shelter of a Saviour's love, their lives fashioned after the rule and doctrine of Christ, whatever their station in life may be.

Applying this exhortation to their own diocese of Newcastle, the Bishop entered an urgent plea for his scheme of Church extension and at the same time for

a consolidation of the various Church societies which had sprung up spasmodically and in some cases antagonistically throughout the diocese.

We need union. Carelessness, apathy, infidelity, indifference, these are sapping the foundations of that Christianity on which the former prosperity of England has risen ; that Christianity which is alone the guarantee of her success or even of her continuance in the future. . . . There are signs enough and to spare that bid us of the Church of England concentrate, and then extend our forces ; to make us who believe in God tremble for what yet may come upon this country, to cause us all to seek more earnestly in our generation, 'to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.' Yet God acts on His own, not on our knowledge. We know little. He knows all. It is ours to work in the present, trusting the future and its conditions to Him. Calm and quiet through all these centuries has Robert Rhodes' steeple looked down upon the hurrying waters of the Tyne, as to and fro, in ceaseless motion and with varying tides, those waters have prevailed. Decaying, then repaired, in some sense new, yet ever still essentially the same, that steeple remains, and shall remain, the ornament and grace of this city. Checked at times and mutilated at others, yet the voice of prayer and the note of praise have risen from the Church beneath ; while ever swelled the gathering ranks of the great army of the mighty dead, and younger worshippers thronged in to catch up in turn the failing song, and re-enunciate the prayers that faded out of closing mouths or were silenced on the dying lips. Is there here no presage of the future ? Do not these tell us of some changes that shall necessarily come upon us ourselves and upon the Church of God ; of the power of One enthroned above the water flood, whose dwelling is still with the sons of men ? Can we not look up hopefully as we thank God and take courage for our work—quietly girding ourselves for the various and difficult tasks that lie before us, the

old motto filling our hearts and influencing our lives—
Nisi Dominus frustra ?

The two days during which the Conference lasted were fruitful in practical discussions which contributed materially towards bringing the organisation of the infant diocese into system and into working order. The first great step of reconstruction had been taken, and the ship was already beginning to 'find herself.' The next epoch in diocesan history is marked by the address which the Bishop delivered at his primary Visitation held in May 1887. He had purposely delayed the occasion until he should have had opportunity of making a thorough personal survey of the diocese, and he was able to state in the opening sentences of his charge that he had now visited and taken part in some service, either by preaching, confirming, or instituting an incumbent, in every parish within its boundaries with one solitary exception. If I quote rather copiously from this charge, delivered in the four centres of Newcastle, Alnwick, Hexham, and Berwick-on-Tweed, it is with the object of showing the conception which their author had formed of his duties and responsibilities and of the guidance which he considered it necessary for him to give to those who had been placed under his rule and governance.

He began by an earnest plea for the conduct of daily services in the parish churches, town and country alike. He knew well the special difficulties attending the practice in the wide-spreading districts to be found in some of the Northumberland parishes with a population scattered over forty or fifty thousand acres. But the Church's work, he pointed out, could best be done in the Church's own appointed way, and the saying of the daily morning and evening prayer in the parish

church was the ordered rule of life for every clergyman, subject to the exceptions of 'sickness or some other urgent cause' mentioned in the Rubric. And speaking as an old parish priest he could say 'that the wisdom of this rule is experienced by those who have for years obeyed it, who feel instinctively that life lacks something on days when they have been hindered from carrying the rule into effect.'

The returns to his Visitation queries had shown a disquieting laxity in the celebration of the Holy Communion, the Sacrament which, in the Bishop's words, was 'now, as in the days of old, the great touchstone of Christian obedience, character and love.' It appeared that there were three parishes in which the Holy Communion was only administered four times in the year; in three others only six times in the year; in eighteen it was administered monthly; in forty-six monthly and on great festivals. The Bishop expressed an earnest wish that the opportunities of joining in the highest spiritual service of the Church might be very largely increased, and at the same time he took occasion to express himself very strongly on the subject of what he regarded as the wholly unauthorised custom of 'Evening Communions.'

Although the intention has been to enable more persons to attend, I think a mistake has been made; for where an early has been substituted for an evening Communion, the happiest results have followed. The whole tendency of the present day is to put off commencing the observance of Sunday to as late an hour as possible: and against this we have to urge the necessity of some self-denial and exertion that the whole day may be given to God.

. . . I well know the difficulty of dropping a custom

begun or inherited, but I hope some way of effecting the change may possibly be found and that evening Communion may not be introduced into any more parishes in the diocese.

It was a question which, as we shall see, was to cause him much trouble and anxiety in the diocese of Chichester.¹

A comparison of the confirmation statistics of Northumberland during the four years immediately preceding the creation of the Newcastle diocese with those of the four years that had elapsed since the consecration had shown a very remarkable increase in the number of candidates. It had become possible to multiply almost indefinitely the centres in which the rite was administered. Confirmation services were now held at regular intervals in all parts of the diocese, and a direct ratio was apparent between the number of centres of confirmation and the number of candidates presented. And speaking from his full experience both as a parish priest and as a missionary, he impressed upon his hearers the need of constant personal instruction of their flock by the clergy, and especially of the newly confirmed, in the shape of bible-classes and communicants' meetings.

The 'saints' have to be 'perfected,' the 'Body of Christ to be edified' as well as the 'work of the Ministry' to be performed, and hungry souls are reaching out for the solid food of instruction. It is impossible to lay down any rule or make any suggestion that shall be equally applicable alike to town and country congregations, to the parishes where great masses of people are grouped thickly round the Church or Mission building, and to the parishes so common in this diocese,

¹ *Vide infra*, p. 283 *et seq.*

enormous in extent, with a sparse and widely scattered population, or with hamlets or farmhouses lying at many and distant intervals.

We must take the church to the people where at present they will not come to the church. We must teach them how to worship, before they can appreciate our unrivalled Book of Common Prayer. So mission rooms, buildings, chapels, rise up and are filled; and to many of these chapels licenses for the administration of the Sacraments are granted. But generally speaking these should be to the parish church what of old the synagogues of Israel were to the Temple, namely feeders. The use of the paged Prayer Book will be found very useful as an education in these services: more persons than it will be generally believed are deterred from attending our churches from not being able easily to find their way about the Prayer Book.

‘Special Missions,’ a subject on which no man was more qualified to speak, might be, and often were, of incalculable good to the whole life of a parish. But he insisted strongly that they should not be held too frequently,¹ ‘nor should they supplant the steady daily work of the edification of the spiritual life of the parishioners by their appointed pastor.’

The due supply of clergy formed then, as it does to-day, a most difficult question.

There may be some difficulty (said the Bishop) in the case of a diocese so remote as ours, and offering such slender chance of any speedy preferment, in obtaining easily the exact candidates for ordination that we should desire. Yet where does the Church offer like opportunities for work, with such materials to work upon, as in these northern dioceses? And where there is plenty of well-organised work, with an active and sympathetic incumbent at the head of affairs, there

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 73.

will never be any insuperable difficulty in finding a suitable man as curate. Where these advantages cannot be had, the incumbent can at least offer compensation by guiding and training the young deacon or priest in the first years of his clerical life. The want of constant supervision and help, and especially of ready sympathy, is often keenly felt by a man young in years and wanting in experience, when compelled to face more closely and to deal more intimately with the great mysteries of sin and sorrow or death.

But whether there was difficulty or not, the Bishop of Newcastle was thoroughly convinced that there must be no lowering of the standard of attainments, and he was resolved, he said, to enforce this conviction in his decisions respecting the admission of candidates for Holy Orders at the risk of appearing harsh or arbitrary. He was able, however, to record a small but steady and substantial increase in the number of deacons and priests whom he had ordained year by year. In 1883 there were eleven deacons and eleven priests; in 1886 fourteen priests and seventeen deacons.

The returns made to the Visitation questions issued by Bishop Shute Barrington in the year 1814, from which Bishop Wilberforce quoted at considerable length, gave an interesting picture of Church life in the north of England at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and were a sufficient explanation of the traditions which still oppressed Northumberland when the new diocese was created.

Quarterly administrations of the Holy Communion were then the rule in the great majority of the parishes. In one church there were only two such services in the year. In nine churches there were three; in two churches there were five; in two other churches there were six; in two more churches there were seven. 'What a

commentary upon these figures,' said the Bishop, 'is furnished by the action of the Wesleyan body . . . who four years after John Wesley's death came to the reluctant agreement that the Lord's Supper be administered amongst us, but never on those Sundays on which it is administered in the Parochial Church.'

Earnest people (he continued) must have means of grace; if the Church will not provide these, they will be sought elsewhere.

Gosforth was then a chapel of ease to Newcastle; the curate lived at Dunston with his father, there being no house of residence at Gosforth. Ponteland parish was ten miles by five. The vicar was non-resident, but his curate lived in the vicarage house and had a salary of £80. The Vicar of Longbenton was master of a school in Cornwall and was non-resident. His curate occupied the vicarage house and had a salary of £60. The Vicar of Cramlington also held and lived at Kirby-under-Dale. His curate lived a mile and a half from the church, there being no vicarage, and his stipend was thirty guineas per annum. The population of the parish of Tynemouth was then about 22,000. There was one resident clergyman, no curate, no chapel of ease.

And so the tale runs on; we are transported to the England of Parson Adams and Parson Trulliber. One more extract will suffice.

Bamburgh parish was eleven miles by eight, with a population of 3000; the vicar also held Tweedmouth, Ancroft and Lucker. The Vicar of Beadnell, who also held Shotley and Whittonstall, lived at Bamburgh Castle, and served Beadnell. He records that there used only to be prayers and a sermon every Lord's Day in the afternoon. But he adds, 'as I serve no other cure, and at the solicitation of my parishioners, I have for some years past indulged them with a forenoon service at pleasure.'

These facts, as the Bishop somewhat drily observed, may help to account for the spread of Nonconformity in certain districts.

In other portions of the charge, varied daily at each of the four centres, he dealt with many of the difficulties which make up the routine of the life of a parish priest, with the relations between Church and Dissent, with the necessity for continuous theological study, and with the hindrance to Church work, from whatever cause arising. Holding strong definite opinions of his own, he announced his determination 'to be a Bishop of the Church of God, not of any party or parties,' and he gave some excellent practical advice, of which the following is a sample.

Our teaching, whilst both subjective and objective, whilst enforcing both the personal relation to Christ of each redeemed and sanctified person, and the doctrine of the sacraments and the Church of Christ, must be marked by patience, forbearance, gentleness. 'Speaking the truth in love' is the apostolic precept, never more requisite than in these days when strange claims are made by some, and when many who, if it were necessary, might very probably go to the stake for their principles, find it difficult to keep their temper for five minutes together when arguing as to doctrine or practice with an opponent.

CHAPTER VII

BISHOP OF NEWCASTLE—1882-1895 (*continued*)

Some personal characteristics—Reminiscences of Dr. Hodgkin—Confirmation addresses—The ordination week at the Palace—His methods with the candidates—Miss Ellice Hopkins—Temperance work—Letters on the Church of England Temperance Society—His relations with the clergy—Friendships among the laity—Extracts from his correspondence—Assists Bishop Wilkinson in Cornwall.

It is difficult to tell the story of Bishop Wilberforce's life at Newcastle with any strict adherence to chronology. Certain events detach themselves and mark an epoch in the progress of the diocese: a Conference, a Visitation, or the inauguration of some great scheme of social reform. But the ceaseless toil, the multiplicity of small duties, the time, thought, and labour spent on minute details of organisation, the vexatious interruptions, the endless correspondence, the apparent trifles which are often of the gravest moment—these defy the biographer, and render it most difficult, if not impossible, to give an adequate picture of the daily burdens of an English bishop. As chaplain to his father Ernest Wilberforce had enjoyed an exceptional training in the routine work of his office, and he had grasped the great principle of judicious delegation; he knew how to select his lieutenants, and having chosen them, how to leave them to their allotted tasks with the minimum

of interference. But he was not one of those men who can avail themselves of the substituted service of secretaries and chaplains. He had a well-founded belief in the efficacy of the personal interview, and of the autograph letter. He had got to gain the confidence of a flock whose intercourse with their chief pastor had hitherto been very much restricted, and who could only be won over by close fellowship and by individual appeal. The Northumbrian nature is strong and stubborn, but of all qualities that reach the heart of a north-country man, manliness and straightforwardness stand pre-eminent. Bluntness of speech and stern adherence to an unpopular policy give no offence where the honesty of purpose, the steadfastness of character, and the sense of absolute justice are transparent. If these are united to tenderness of heart and to a sympathy which admits no limitations of class or creed, so much the better. Bishop Wilberforce possessed in no stinted measure the physical attributes which extort the admiration of a long-limbed, muscular peasantry. It has been well said of him ¹ that had he been Bishop of Durham in the old days and levied the fencible men of the bishopric against the Scots, he would have made his mark in Border warfare and been as vigorous as any Warden of the Marches. Fresh air, whether from sea or moorland, was to him the elixir of life. Violent exercise was an absolute necessity, and the long walks which formed his main indulgence were all the pleasanter for bringing him across the sons of the soil into whose joys and sorrows he had learnt from earliest boyhood to enter.

The chief impression that the Bishop has left on my memory (writes Dr. Thomas Hodgkin) is that of *strength*, both physical and moral. I think of him striding

¹ In a communication to me from Mr. Howard Pease.

down the road to Newcastle at a pace which was the despair of most other pedestrians,¹ or engaging in some hard manual labour in order to work off the superfluous energy of his frame. Or I think of that strong, decided upper lip of his, and I feel that if I had been one of his clergy, I should have had to own that here was a strong, powerful will, that he was indeed a man born to rule. My happiest personal remembrance is of a three days' walking tour which I took with him and another friend along the line of the Roman wall. How splendidly he strode along uphill and downhill by the side of the ancient *limes*. On the morning of our second day it had been arranged that we should visit and open a British grave on a hill above Bellingham. The visiting *we* could manage; the opening was practically all his work. Taking first a spade and then a pickaxe from the hired labourers, and throwing off coat and waistcoat, he 'howked'² away at the tumulus for two or three hours, and at last revealed to us the skeleton of a possible British chief, who was pronounced by a medical student, examining the skull, to have been probably a man of between 50 and 60 years of age. The Bishop was keenly interested in the archæological result; but I think what he enjoyed most was the swing of the axe and the push of the spade by his vigorous arms, the working off of that exuberant physical energy which often made the long hours necessarily spent at the desk a burden to him. I remember, too, how, on this excursion, he got into conversation with a Northumbrian farmer about the hawks that haunted the hills; and his delight at the fine old-fashioned Saxon words ('stronghold' was one of them) which the man brought out unconsciously in his conversation.³

¹ *Vide supra*. The Bishop used to declare that he made Westgate Hill, the steep incline leading from the City to Benwell, a test of young men's powers. 'Are you a good walker?' he would ask. 'If the man professed that he was, then I would let him have it,' the Bishop would say with a laugh, 'till he cried for mercy; but if he was more modest, I spared him.'

² A Northumbrian word much used by the hewers of coal.

³ A relic of the expedition in the shape of a Roman cinerary urn was a prominent ornament in the library at Benwell.

Ernest Wilberforce had an instinctive understanding of all men who lived by the land, whether in Sussex or Wessex or in Northumberland, but it took him a considerable time to appreciate the rugged manners of the Northumbrian miner and operatives; and even to the last they were somewhat of a puzzle to him.

Walking up from the cathedral one day with the Bishop (writes Archdeacon Henderson), we passed a miner in Benwell Lane whom he saluted with a friendly 'Fine day!' The man turned, said nothing, but gave the Bishop a stolid stare by way of reply. 'There,' said he, 'that's what in Northumberland they call independence, and in the south rudeness!' I attempted to explain that it was only surprise and astonishment—that the man was only shying at the Bishop's attire, which he probably had never seen before, just as a horse might shy at a steam-roller. 'All very well for you to make excuses, but if that man's look meant anything, and it meant a good deal, it meant 'Who said it war'n't? D'ye want to argify?' Even among the clergy there were a few who never quite understood the Bishop putting himself on the same level with the ordinary clergyman and conversing with them in his free and easy manner.

Many were his adventures in the remoter parishes under the Cheviot Hills, where no Bishop had been seen within the memory of man, probably not since the days of Bishop Eardulf or St. Cuthbert.¹ In these bleak regions he would take two and sometimes three Confirmations on the same day, and it was no uncommon experience for him to wade through snow knee-deep as he walked from church to church. On one occasion

¹ In or about the year 1872 my father, then Bishop of Hereford, undertook a confirmation tour in the diocese of St. Davids for Bishop Thirlwall. He held service in one church, at least, which no Bishop had visited since the Norman Conquest.

he found himself all but snowed up at a wayside station. No vehicle was procurable; but he strode off across the fields for his destination three miles away with his robe case swung over his shoulder.

These expeditions (says Archdeacon Henderson) brought him into contact with many of the Northumbrian shepherds and others dwelling in the outlying districts and furnished him with a fund of stories, which he delighted to retail when at examination times he used to meet his chaplains, after evensong in the Chapel, in the study or the smoking-room. Those evenings were always looked forward to as a very pleasant ending to the day's work, for, in the words of one of his chaplains, the late Bishop Creighton, 'he was a born boon companion, his father's son.' His strong sense of humour was allowed full play on such occasions, even when the story told against himself.

The multiplication of Confirmations by holding them at more numerous centres and at shorter intervals was indeed, as the Bishop had pointed out in his Visitation charge,¹ one of the most conspicuous consequences of the creation of the see of Newcastle. The result more than requited him for all the hard and rough work which it entailed. The increase in the number of those confirmed was considerably over 1000 in his very first year. And whereas in the four years immediately preceding the division of the old diocese the number of candidates for confirmation in Northumberland was 6704, in the four years that followed they rose to a total of 13,363.

In the never-failing variety and in the impressiveness of his Confirmation addresses Ernest Wilberforce strongly resembled his father. The effect which they

¹ *Supra*, p. 141.

produced cannot be described better than in the words of one who was confirmed and afterwards ordained by him.

I was reading, at the time when the Bishop of Newcastle confirmed me, with one of his country clergy, a man of old-fashioned evangelical views, who did not, I think, possess, and certainly never wore, a cassock, and who celebrated the Holy Communion once a month only, and that after Mattins. But though he was not a Churchman of the Bishop's sort, my tutor had a great respect and love for him. Both men were strong teetotallers, and both had a passion for nature and the open air; so I was taught before my confirmation to regard the Bishop with unusual veneration. The Confirmation I remember well. I can see now that Northumberland church on a Saturday afternoon in April crowded with candidates and their friends, the curious procession of clergy in various coloured hoods (there was no surpliced choir, I think), and at the end, preceded by a short elderly curate bearing aloft an elaborate gold and ivory pastoral staff, the strong figure of the Bishop.

The subject of his two addresses I completely forget; the impression of them I can never efface from my mind. After them there was no room for carelessness or inattention; they were the sort of addresses that leave their mark. I remember vividly the moment of the laying on of his hands, and how, after that action was over, the Bishop bent down and whispered to each candidate 'Now go back to your seat and pray quietly.'¹ I have in after years seen other Bishops confirm, Bishops more widely known and more distinguished, but I have seen only one, and that the present Bishop of London, who administered that rite with the tremendous earnestness and sense of awe which characterised Bishop Wilberforce.

¹ *Vide infra*, p. 237.

His Ordinations were of a piece with his Confirmations. No man was ever more absolutely penetrated with the solemn reality of the act, and of the trust imposed upon him. It was his custom to hold two Ordinations in the year, at the Advent and Trinity Ember seasons. The Advent Ordination was always held in the cathedral at Newcastle and the Trinity Ordination at some other church in the diocese. At these seasons the Bishop gave up himself, his house, and all his other work to the candidates. Everything was made subservient to the one great object of making it a time of earnest devotion. If by some emergency he was called temporarily away, one of the chaplains would receive a short written message. On one occasion when the Ordination was to be held at Alnwick he was unable to be present the first day of the examination, and the chaplain received the following note :

May I ask you to be kind enough to read the enclosed to the candidates at some time during, or immediately after, the service, as may be thought best, but in church?

My sons in Christ,—Being unable to be with you this first evening, I write a word or two which I ask Canon Henderson to read to you. And first let me point out to you that I wish all of you to remain quietly at Alnwick after the Ordination until the Monday morning and to attend the evening service on Sunday in the church in which you are ordained. Next let me earnestly ask all of you to try and use this short time as one of quiet prayer and meditation, and so far as may be to lay aside for the time the more ordinary topics of conversation with each other or your friends, and to mark the time as to be spent ‘apart with Jesus.’ Lastly, let me remind each one of you that you will be a missionary in the house where hospitality is afforded

you, and that the character of your Master will be much in your hands in the household, for men will observe you, your demeanour and your words, and they will judge of the office you seek by the manner of your life and conversation during the short time that remains before you are admitted to that office. It is yours to raise or weaken the whole idea of the priesthood in the eyes of the Alnwick Churchmen.

Commending you to the guidance of our Father,
I am ever your affectionate Father in God,

E. R. NEWCASTLE.

And here, though it relates to his Chichester and not to his Newcastle episcopate, may be appended some further recollections of the same clergyman on whose memory I have already drawn in regard to the Bishop's Confirmations.

When I came to him as an Ordination candidate, it was at the time of the 'Crisis in the Church,' and Bishops were keenly alive to the dangers of Romanising among the clergy. I had a preliminary interview in the study at Chichester—a very hurried affair, as the Bishop had only a few minutes. Having catechised me as to 'Invocation of Saints' (I think) and the books of devotion that I used, he dismissed me. The Bishop seemed to me hard and alarming. I came up for Ordination. The Embertide at Chichester was kept in a rather old-fashioned way—the candidates dined with the family and adjourned after dinner to the drawing-room until the hour for chapel. I remember one incident on the first evening. The ladies had left the dinner-table and the Bishop got up from his armchair to sit at the other end of the table. Then, quite unexpectedly, while we were sipping our coffee, the Bishop rose and made an address, extremely simple, extremely pointed, and extremely unexpected. 'Gentlemen,' he began, 'you are here on a most solemn errand.' Then he spoke of what Ordination

meant. He urged that it meant a completely new life; and he concluded in some such words as these: 'For Heaven's sake, gentlemen, don't go to Ordination with any closed doors in your life. You know what the Prayer Book says, *Let him come to me or some other discreet and learned minister of God's Word and open his grief.*' And with this he ended. I can remember looking round the table at the candles and flowers and men in evening dress and wondering whether an exhortation to private confession had ever been made in such circumstances before. Certainly few men besides the late Bishop could have made it effectively at such a time.

The private interview between a bishop and an ordinand is a solemn and a critical thing. Twice I interviewed Bishop Wilberforce in that relation—before my ordination as deacon, and a year later before my ordination as priest. On the first occasion I was nervous, hesitating, doubtful, and filled the Bishop with suspicion and alarm. He liked plain 'yes' and 'no'; and I was only able to reply with 'I think I do' or 'I hope so.' I remember his saying that he hoped he was right in ordaining me, and he was clearly doubtful. But his prayer with me, before I left his study, I shall never forget. Certainly amid heavenly things he walked with a very sure tread. I remember phrases of that prayer now, and also the reality and solemnity of his blessing with which the interview ended.

Though the Bishop was disquieting to a timid man, he was most extraordinarily kind. I was physically out of sorts and I had to see a doctor. The Bishop did not encourage fasting communion. I felt strongly on that point. The arrangements of the Ordination day imposed a severe strain on candidates who wished to fast, for there was Mattins in the Chapel at 8 A.M., then breakfast and the Ordination in the cathedral at 11. I went to the Bishop on the Saturday afternoon and asked to be excused from Mattins next morning. He looked me straight in the face and said 'You mean

you want to lie in bed.' I said I did, because I wished to fast. He said 'Certainly. Do as you like. Tell the butler to put some milk and biscuits in your room when you go to bed. But remember fasting communion is not a law of the Church.' I answered that I did not think it was, but that it was a practice which I had long observed and which I did not wish to break. He replied 'The great point is that you should be in the fittest state to receive the Grace of Ordination. If all the time you are thinking you are going to faint, you are *not* in the fittest state!' And with that and a pat on the back, he left me.

On that Saturday evening—the last thing—came the Bishop's charge. I have heard other Bishops charge their candidates. I have never heard a charge so solemn, so overwhelming as his. As he stood before the altar in his chapel he was absolutely penetrated by what he was saying. I had no notebook with me, but I took very brief notes of the points on the fly-leaf of a Prayer Book, which is before me now, and as I write I can hear the infectious courage which rang out in his voice. I remember, too, isolated passages, as when he said 'My brothers, you are going out into a world which does not believe in the Holy Communion.' The charge, we thought, was over; the Bishop had paused, and then he said—very slowly and not relating to anything that had gone before—'I lay this charge on those of you who are to be ordained priests to-morrow. I forbid you to hear any private confession until you have been two full years in priest's orders, and I forbid you to hear the confession of any woman until you have reached the age of thirty years.' He repeated it slowly again, and then he added 'I am not now speaking of sudden calls to sudden death-beds, in which case this rule will not apply.' I can remember to this day the look of amazement on the face of a Low Church deacon who was sitting exactly opposite to me in the chapel. Few Bishops at the time, I fancy, would have had the courage and the wisdom to speak as the Bishop spoke then.

When my time came to be made a priest, a year later, the Bishop laid the same charge on me; but he did it then, not, as before, at the conclusion of the charge, but after the actual Ordination service, in the vestry when he gave us our Letters of Orders. He had a ceremony, certainly an 'additional' one, which was most impressive. All candidates for the priesthood had to bring white stoles. After the laying on of hands he used to take the stole and put it round the neck of the newly ordained.

In my deacon's year I saw little of the Bishop. He told me after my ordination that he was afraid of me. 'Mind,' he said, 'no high-flying at St. James', Barchester. But if you get into any trouble, write to me.' There was no high-flying, and when I came to be ordained priest, his distrust was gone. I talked over our difficulties freely; he let me say my say, and no man was ever more kindly or more fatherly than he.

This vignette of the Bishop in the midst of his Ordination candidates is especially interesting as coming from one who was never brought into any close intimacy with him, and whose passport bore no special endorsement. The following letter from the late Miss Ellice Hopkins shows him in another aspect. It is undated, but obviously belongs to the early days of his episcopate.

MY DEAR LORD,—I don't feel I expressed myself half gratefully enough to you for all your kindness to myself personally, and for the strength and comfort of feeling the work I have so much at heart prospering so well under your guidance. I shall never forget your going the whole way back to Newcastle to fetch my lost luggage for me. You always make my memory ache a little bit. The men I have 'loved and lost 'awhile' were just as strong and tender to women, and it is a little hard to do without it all and have no home ties. Will you pray for me that I may realise in my hard lonely life that 'I am married to another, even

Christ.' His strength and tenderness ought to make up for the giving up of all home ties and home love. . . . The weakest point of the Newcastle work seems to me to be the Northumberland Association, but it may be only because it is inchoate. I cannot see how you are to bring pressure enough to bear on the municipality to get those vitally important clauses in the Criminal Law Amendment Bill¹ incorporated in a Town Act. . . . You have whole blocks of houses in Newcastle that are the graves of all decency and the cradles of pestilence moral and physical. Spence Watson told me that he himself took round some gentlemen who were sceptical, and before they had been at it half an hour they turned sick with the foul air and could not go on.

Miss Hopkins in her zeal for righteousness had possibly formed an exaggerated idea of the power which the Bishop possessed over the municipality of Newcastle and over the city fathers generally. Their ranks contained a strong element of somewhat truculent Nonconformity which had been already offended by his undiplomatic warmth of language over the difficulties arising out of the Newcastle Grammar School. And his indictment of the Tyne Improvement Commissioners for refusing to blow up some rocks at the harbour mouth—the Black Middens—on which ships were constantly being wrecked, with accompanying loss of life, had brought a swarm of hornets about his ears. He was not the man to bend before clamour and misrepresentation, and long before he quitted the diocese he had lived down the temporary ebullitions of hostility, but for the moment they were a drag on his efforts in more directions than one. He parted, it should be said, on the best of terms with the Editor of the *Newcastle Chronicle*, which from time to time had sharply criticised

¹ Passed August 1885; 48 & 49 Vict. c. 69.

his policy, and the congratulations which he never failed to send to its proprietor, Mr. Joseph Cowen, on the successful result of his fiercely contested elections were always warmly acknowledged.

In the great cause with which the name of Miss Ellice Hopkins will ever be associated, Ernest Wilberforce was an indefatigable fellow-worker. The pioneer in the 'White Cross' movement for social purity had been Bishop Lightfoot; but the movement was carried forward no less vigorously in the diocese of Newcastle. The Bishop and Mrs. Wilberforce were joint Presidents of the Diocesan Society for the Protection of Women and Children, and the Refuge and Home of Mercy which were maintained at Newcastle in connection with it were founded by them as a direct outcome of the visit of Miss Hopkins to which allusion has been made. Mrs. Wilberforce was largely instrumental in raising the money which was necessary for the 'bricks and mortar,' and the name of the 'Wilberforce Refuge,' given to that institution after they had left Newcastle, is an abiding witness to their labours on behalf of the tempted and the fallen.

Intemperance is the twin sister of impurity, and drunkenness with all its train of misery and sin was only too prevalent in certain parts of the Newcastle diocese. Here as at Seaforth, and in his experience as a missionary, Ernest Wilberforce found that the Church of England Temperance Society provided the readiest means of grappling with the evil, and he put forward all his powers of persuasion to induce the clergy to avail themselves of this plastic and comprehensive organisation. He was constant in urging that over and above the rescue of a drunkard here and there, and the prevention of others from falling into the

'liquor habit,' a parochial branch of the C.E.T.S. had excellent results of an indirect kind. Church attendance was almost certain to be improved, a larger number of candidates for confirmation might be expected, while a platform was provided upon which Churchman and Dissenter could meet in a common cause without any sacrifice of principle on either side. The warmest recognition of the Bishop's work was given by officials of temperance societies outside that of the Church of England. Nor were his labours the less appreciated because they were carried on in a spirit of Christian charity and with concession to the infirmities of weaker brethren. Wine was not banished from the dinner table at Benwell Tower, and, firm abstainer as he always continued to be, the Bishop was reported to have made the half-regretful admission, 'What a good thing in itself is a glass of old sherry!' Nor was he offended at Bishop Claughton's playful allusion to the 'alcoholic dementia' of the Wilberforce family.

In December 1883 a memorable meeting was held at Berwick-on-Tweed in order to found a branch of the Church of England Temperance Society. The Bishop held the attention of a vast audience closely riveted for upwards of an hour. Many leading Nonconformists were present, and one was heard to say that it was 'the old father come to life again.'

There is room in England, he said, for any temperance society, whether it belongs to the Church of England, or to the Presbyterian or any other denomination—Blue Ribbon Army or whatever it calls itself.

Remember we have to work in one and the same cause and we won't fall out with one another in the way. We will all set our faces against the common foe and will only try with the help of God to do our work

more perfectly than any other body or society does. I can only say for myself that some of my best workers when I was a parish clergyman in Lancashire were found in the ranks of the Good Templar Body.¹ Our Society has a dual basis—one right and one left—but there is only one body and one heart, and so we get rid of the false notion of one side being on a higher spiritual level than another. I claim my liberty, my brothers, and you may have yours—to use it in a Christian moderation or not to use it at all. This, however, I have found, that when you have started your society on the dual basis you will find it very difficult to keep to it. You will find it very difficult to keep the members of the general or non-abstaining section to their own side. They will go on happily enough for a time, but gradually, one by one, they will get into the water and want to join the other side.

You may have heard that I have had the audacity to ask the good people of the diocese to give me £100,000! Well, if those engaged in the liquor trade would give me all that is spent upon alcoholic liquors in England for five hours only I should have all I ask. You, my brothers and sisters, I challenge you in the name of our common God to form to-night one great praying, loving, working society. And you may depend upon this, that the little mustard-seed sown to-night will grow and grow and grow till under its blessed shade shall be sitting men and women, followers of Jesus and rejoicing in His love. Let there be prayer, let there be work, and no man can prophesy to what dimensions this society shall grow. The love of God is unlimited in its extent. The depth of the power of God and the Holy Ghost no man has ever yet fathomed.

A few days prior to the meeting the Bishop had written the following letter to Earl Percy,² who in a

¹ Like Archbishop Temple, Ernest Wilberforce was a member of the Independent Order of Rechabites, the most democratic of all the temperance societies.

² The present Duke of Northumberland.

most friendly spirit had expressed a wish to know something clear and precise about the Church of England Temperance Society before he could feel himself justified in supporting it.

I must plead for your indulgence, for I could not hope to answer your letter under a pamphlet which you would not have time to read, nor I to write. But perhaps you will some day give me the advantage of talking those matters over with you; words written sometimes bear a different meaning to the receiver from that which was in the writer's mind; and sometimes, too, there is imparted with 'black and white' an appearance of antagonism which is quite unintentional. Probably the simplest course would be for me to state very briefly my own position, which I believe to be that also of the Church of England Temperance Society, viz.:—that I maintain I have a perfect right, if I choose, to use lawfully or abstain altogether from using, if I choose, any of God's gifts either direct or indirect. That I have also a right to try and *persuade* others to see matters in the same light in which they present themselves to me. That I see thousands and thousands living miserably and dying impenitently on account of their misuse of alcohol. That all power of will being broken down in them, their only hope of regaining the place they have lost in the spiritual world is by wholly abstaining from that which they cannot use without abuse. That for *me* practice is better than precept, and that while Romans xiv. 21¹ remains written my position is unassailable.

I do not, however, enter into the licensing question or the physiological argument. I only claim my Christian liberty to use or not to use, and my right to try and persuade others. One cannot see thousands going into a drunkard's grave, in spite of baptismal vow, confirmation strength and baptismal grace—

¹ 'It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended or is made weak.'

without doing something to pull them out of the fire, provided that something be lawful. So the Church of England Temperance Society has its two arms of one body, the total abstainers and the general section. She allows no foolish talk as to one or the other being on a higher or a lower spiritual level. She has no lifelong vows; no substitution of anything for the wine at Holy Communion, and is, I maintain, merely the Church of England looking steadily in the direction of temperance for a certain purpose. And I believe if she had taken up the matter earlier in the day and had gathered with her the wisdom, moderation, and strength of the land, including all temperate users of alcohol who hate intemperance quite as much as total abstainers do, there would have been much less of that wild talk and those foolish and untrue or exaggerated arguments which irritate or repel so many now.

I hope my brevity has led neither to obscurity nor to incivility—I can assure you I intend neither. But I tell you honestly that I do try to secure the cordial and approving co-operation in this work of one like yourself who could bring to the work such talents, such earnestness of moral purpose and such integrity of life. And by banding together earnest men, holding many different opinions yet all with one aim in view, we shall be more likely to secure widely extended help and frame wiser counsels than if a few enthusiastic men alone carry on the work.

Stern and unflinching in his denunciation of drunkenness, Ernest Wilberforce was tenderness itself in his dealings with the individual sinner. Few cases are more distressing or more difficult to deal with than those where a clergyman has fallen into habits of intemperance. The Bishop's correspondence in one of them is lying before me as I write, marked throughout by the strong sense of justness and fairness which ever characterised him, yet compassionate and considerate,

so far as consideration was possible. The facts were clear, and the unfortunate gentleman was induced to vacate his office without the scandal of judicial proceedings. But there were features which induced the Bishop to hope that, under happier auspices, he might yet do good and useful work in his chosen calling. Without any effort at minimising the sad story he succeeded in inducing an experienced parish priest in another diocese to give the transgressor a fresh start. The good Samaritan had no cause to regret his charity, and in writing to the Bishop he congratulated the clergy of Northumberland in having one set over them to whom they could appeal with perfect confidence in the hour of need. 'If ever,' he wrote, 'I should be in a fix, I shall wish for such a friend as your Lordship.'

To many, indeed, of the Northumbrian clergy, unused as they were to any close supervision, and no less independent in spirit and manner than their brothers of the laity, the activity and the constant presence of their Diocesan was somewhat alarming. The air of reserve which Ernest Wilberforce seldom shook off in his official dealings was apt to be disconcerting to those who met him for the first time, and, as was remarked in one of the newspapers, there was a suggestion about his manner that in emergencies he could put the pointed end of his pastoral staff to the use suggested by the Latin motto, *Curva trahit, directa regit, pars infima pungit*, and in some of the remoter parishes irregularities and abuses had grown up which had to be corrected and suppressed with a strong hand.

I cannot put on paper (the present Bishop of St. Albans ¹ writes to me), because it would not be wise to

¹ The Right Rev. Edgar Jacob, D.D., who succeeded Ernest Wilberforce on his translation to Chichester.

do so, what Bishop Wilberforce did in removing abuses, though I know from my own experience that what he did must have often caused him the gravest anxiety and been extremely difficult.

Few Bishops, I may safely say, can have had a fuller knowledge of the trials and troubles of the parochial clergy. His father has left on record the resolution made on the day of his consecration as Bishop of Oxford 'to be a Father in God to men of all opinions among the clergy.' Neither at Newcastle nor afterwards at Chichester were those words ever forgotten by Ernest Wilberforce. Benwell was always open to the clergy and their wives, both at great garden and evening parties, where Mrs. Wilberforce with her natural gift for hospitality put her guests from the highest to the lowest at their ease, and in quiet visits from which many a clergyman went back to his far-off lonely parish refreshed and cheered by the knowledge that he was not a single and forgotten priest, but a member of a big family of which the Bishop was indeed the father¹; a father who entered into the joys and sorrows of his children. The following letter speaks for itself.

MY DEAR LORD BISHOP,—It was truly kind of you, amidst the almost infinite demands upon your time, to find opportunity as well as inclination to express your sympathy with me under my recent affliction. It was not only kind, indeed, but generous to address your valued words of consolation to one of your flock whom you cannot but have thought to be rather wilful and wayward and even inclined to be refractory. Your

¹ The following passage from a letter of the Bishop to one of his clergy who had just undergone the greatest of earthly bereavements is characteristic of his thoughtfulness in the hour of sorrow. 'I should be so glad if you want a little change if you would come down here for a few days. I think I shall be mostly at home until the third week in November, though of course I am often out in the evenings.'

generosity, you may be assured, will not be lost on me, and as far as a conscience which I have taken some little pains to enlighten will admit, you will afterwards find me one of the most docile of your flock, guided to obedience by the most powerful of all motives, gratitude and love.

In cases of sickness among the clergy he always found time to pay a visit, no matter how far he had to go to pay it, or how much time it took from other things which had to be made up at the cost of his scanty leisure. 'An instance presents itself to my memory,' writes Archdeacon Henderson, 'where several visits were paid to the Vicar, who was suffering from an incurable disease in one of the most inaccessible parts of the diocese.' It was well said, when the time for his departure came, that his unrecorded ministrations to many a poor sick clergyman in time of need would be remembered with gratitude while the outer world was thinking only of his more public life and judging him by that alone.

The Bishop made it a rule, from which he only deviated on the rarest occasions, in person and publicly to institute a new incumbent to his cure of souls. A lively, if rather ungrammatical sketch is given in a local newspaper of one of those occasions, which he valued as a most effective means of establishing friendly relations with clergy and parishioners alike.

Two great events have occurred in the last fortnight, a visit of the Lord Bishop of the Diocese and the Alston Fair. His Lordship's visit was to induct Dr. Rutherford into the charge of Alston parish. It was a noble service and the musical portion was wonderfully well rendered by the organist and choir. His Lordship is entirely of the militant Church. The dignitary who will not idle, with episcopal importance,

at Haltwhistle until the Carlisle train arrives, but sets off alone in the dark to walk three miles along a road he has not seen before, and reaches Featherston in good time to be picked up, having done his murky three miles in two and forty minutes—the dignitary who has his eye on Cross Fell which rises higher than Cheviot, for a visit on the occasion of a ‘helm wind’—when, in the solemn silence of the Church, he raises his hand above the kneeling Vicar, pronounces the solemn benediction over him, and confirms it by placing his hand on Dr. Rutherford’s head, one feels that he means that the business of the Church shall be fulfilled.

It was the exact impression which the Bishop intended to convey to the congregation at large, and such services repeated in church after church throughout the diocese helped to bind him to his clergy with ties which not even death could sever.

I can hardly say how truly I loved the Bishop (wrote a Newcastle incumbent¹ to Mrs. Wilberforce shortly after her husband’s death); my every thought of him is full of veneration and affection and gratitude, and he must ever hold the same place in my life. The sense of his sympathy and trust has done more for me than I can express; and I think I should be ungrateful if I did not tell you what I could not tell him. From his first Ordination at Newcastle till now I feel there has never been a single cloud of misunderstanding or interruption in my grateful love towards him. Since 1882 I have had no work in the Church which he did not solemnly entrust to me with words of cheering encouragement, so that in a very special sense he has always been my Bishop. And so in a very humble way I am truly mourning his departure and thanking God for his entrance into his heavenly rest.

¹ Rev. E. B. Hicks, Vicar of St. Mary’s.

Nor was his influence less remarkable among the laity, the stimulating influence of a manly Christian. By the quayside, in the pitmen's villages, in the slums of Newcastle, his constant presence had earned for him the sobriquet of the Poor Man's Bishop. The territorial magnates and the great captains of industry as well as those who lived a quiet life of unobtrusive usefulness were enlisted among his friends and supporters and drew inspiration from his example. The Duke of Northumberland and Earl Percy,¹ Earl Grey and Mr. Albert Grey,² Lord Tankerville, Sir Matthew White Ridley (afterwards the first Lord Ridley), Sir William Armstrong (afterwards the first Lord Armstrong), Sir Charles Trevelyan, Sir Andrew Noble, Sir Benjamin Browne and Mr. Percy Westmacott are among the names which recur most frequently in his correspondence. Men who differed from him so profoundly as Mr. Joseph Cowen and Dr. Spence Watson were drawn to him by a philanthropy which was practised by them all in common, though manifested in widely divergent ways. Allusion has already been made to his Quaker neighbours, Mr. Pease and Dr. Hodgkin, who, with their families, contributed in no small degree to make Benwell Tower so happy a home.³ The acquaintance of this little group, beginning in neighbourly courtesies and ripening into firm and devoted friendship, gave much of its savour to the daily lives of the Bishop and Mrs. Wilberforce. I have quoted already from the reminiscences which Dr. Hodgkin has been good enough to communicate to me, and I may here add some

¹ The present Duke.

² Now Earl Grey.

³ Benwell Tower was midway between Benwell Dene, the residence of Dr. Hodgkin, on the south, and Pendower, the house of Mr. Pease, Dr. Hodgkin's brother-in-law, on the north.

comments from his pen which, though they do not altogether agree with the view taken elsewhere in these pages, are helpful as showing the Bishop's engrained dislike of wearing his heart on his sleeve.

As the relations between us were only of a social kind, and as I never had actual business to transact with him, I have no title to say anything of his character as an administrator, but my impression derived from an outside observation of his Episcopate was that he was emphatically a just man, what we call in conversation 'straight.' I may very likely be wrong, but I sometimes thought that the remembrance of his brilliant father, who was accused by satirists of 'being all things to all men,' produced in him a certain reaction, a determination to be absolutely one and the same man to everybody. His manner was, perhaps, sometimes felt by strangers to be somewhat unsympathetic, but no one who saw him in the bosom of his family would doubt the keenness of his sympathy with those whom he loved. His sympathy flowed in a strong and deep rather than a wide stream. He did not, I think, care for popularity; perhaps he was too indifferent, if such a thing is possible, to its achievement. The love of a few, the respect of the many, these he certainly earned during his Newcastle Episcopate. These are the salient points in my recollection of this fine and noble nature, whose friendship I shall always look back upon as one of the great privileges of my life, and whose removal (too early as it seemed to our imperfect sight) has made life poorer to all who knew him.

No layman in the diocese could have had better opportunity of estimating the Bishop and his work than Sir Benjamin Browne, a very prominent figure among the Churchmen of Newcastle from the formation of the see down to the present day.

Looking backwards (he wrote to Mrs. Wilberforce on Christmas Day, 1890), I don't suppose you or the

Bishop can realise how utterly different is the state of the Church, and indeed of all Christian work from what it was before you came among us. The past is quickly forgotten, especially for purposes of comparison; but when we recall our weak, leaderless condition in those days, we feel how much under God's blessing we owe to our new Guidance. May both you and the Bishop be spared to the Church for many long years to come. I tell you all this because they say that the men in the thickest of a battle see less of the general effect than lookers-on.

Indeed it is impossible to gain anything like a full picture of the Bishop's busy life and of the impression he created among his friends and contemporaries without borrowing freely from his letter-bag. Ernest Wilberforce kept no diary, save mere jottings and memoranda: the reason will be divined by those who are familiar with the published Life of his father. He had no time, and indeed little taste, for letter-writing outside the family circle and the heavy routine of diocesan work. To his friends then we must turn for those little touches which give light and shade to a picture.

The Bishop's visit (wrote Archdeacon Norris to Mrs. Wilberforce) has been just the tonic we needed. He divined at once how matters stood both with his host and with Churchmen generally here in Bristol—dispirited all round, partly through discouragement in quarters whence discouragement ought least to come, and much more from our own fault and faithlessness and insincerity.¹ First of all in the Cathedral he lifted us at once into a higher region and sustained us there, and then at the Luncheon—which would have been a flat affair without his presence—by some finely tempered sallies he drew sparks of enthusiasm even from our very rotund and Nonconformist chairman. I only

¹ This was prior to the revival of the separate see of Bristol.

hope these twenty-four hours may not have wearied him—his ‘natural’ man I mean—on the far more important mission to Salisbury. I only trouble you with this because I can tell you better than I can tell him how grateful we all are to him.

No less striking is the testimony from his old Lancashire haunts.

I cannot refrain from writing direct to yourself (wrote the Rev. John Bardsley¹ to Mrs. Wilberforce), to say how admirably the Bishop spoke in the Philharmonic Hall on Thursday. It was far away the best speech of the evening in matter and manner, in eloquence and spiritual tone, and—much as we expected—it exceeded our most sanguine expectations. To myself it was especially pleasant to hear him do so well. I recollect the old days when we worked together here for the success of the same cause in the same building, and it was very delightful to hear the welcome he received and the grand use he made of his opportunity.

Side by side with these tributes to his extra-diocesan labours it is fitting to place the following letter from one of his own clergy,² written some five years after his consecration.

I must congratulate you, my dear Lord Bishop, on the Conference and the Town Hall Meeting, and on the signs of the vigorous Church life and spiritual life springing up all round. I have been about a good deal lately, and all the zealous earnest men who work and pray for their people, thank God for sending you amongst them, and for the backbone of strength their Bishop is to them. If you will forgive me for saying it, I know that you do not think so—but I also take leave to think that you ought to know what is felt about you,

¹ Then Vicar of Saint Saviour's, Liverpool, and afterwards Bishop of Sodor and Man, and of Carlisle.

² The Rev. F. W. Bindley.

and how warmly and affectionately your goodness and kindness are appreciated, and how you are rallying hearts round you—and I for one thank God for it daily. ‘Up at the top and it is cold,’ as the child said. But we who live down in the valleys may express sometimes where we feel that light and help come to us from. Of course I mean humanly speaking. Few dioceses, I think, could speak of so united a clergy. None where there is so little party feeling and where men work so harmoniously together. Forgive us for thanking you under God for, at least, a good deal of it. I could not very well say this, because you would not allow me to do so, I know—but it is true—and you cannot forbid me to write it.

In a lighter vein, but not unconnected with an eminently episcopal virtue, is the following letter from Archdeacon Denison, most truculent of controversialists and kindest of men, whose Somersetshire parish of Brent, with its harvest homes and model water-supply, was the seat of a benevolent despotism in which the temporal needs of his flock were the subject of his constant vigilance.

MY DEAR BISHOP,—My happy memories are not so failing. I remember, as I love to think, all of you, your ‘Great’ grandfather included. If you will write to Mr. Segar, White House, Weston-super-Mare, mentioning my name, you will have a genuine cheese such as will not fail to lead you to have others as you require. The best cheeses run from 70 lbs. to 100 lbs. Perhaps there may be smaller than 70 lbs., but I do not recommend them so much. Ask about *keeping* them when cut, place and temperature. The Bishop of Peterborough¹ wrote to me some years ago, not, he said, upon Doctrine or Discipline but upon Cheese. He wanted a cheese for clergy luncheons. I told him,

¹ The Right Rev. W. C. Magee.

having regard especially to the *use*, that it was *infra dignitatem* to send a cheese to a Bishop under 100 lbs. weight. But not being able to lay hands on one so big, I took the liberty of sending two of 75 lbs. each. He said in reply that he hoped he might live to see the end of the two cheeses. He has not applied to me since. I shall be very thankful if your experience of genuine Cheddar at my hands increases the applications for it from regions of the north. There is no food like it when it is genuine.

In the summer of 1888 Wilberforce accompanied the late Bishop Wordsworth of Salisbury on a short holiday trip which had for its object the opening up of more intimate relations between the Church of England and the Old Catholics of Holland.

DEAR MRS. WILBERFORCE (wrote the latter from Enkhuisen),—Your husband has most kindly written to my wife, so I must write to you just a few lines, especially to tell you how rejoiced I have been in having his company. He has not, I fear, slept as well as he ought to have done, but I do not think he has been really unwell. He has been most tender and brotherly to me, making me take the lead far too much, but his support has been of the greatest use, and his judgment and suggestions just what were wanted. I am so thankful to interest another Bishop in the work of extending a helping hand to the Old Catholics of different nations. . . . You must not be surprised if some funny Dutch boys are brought over to Newcastle, as I hope to get them some day to Salisbury. I mean the students of theology from the Seminary at Amersfort, who are brought up in far too narrow a space with no more knowledge of the world than children from 12 to 24 ; in fact they seem to retain a good deal of the nature of children into and beyond middle life, delightful in a certain way, but not quite fit to convert the world. . . . We had our Communion together this morning—by the kindness

of our host, Pastor Dievenbach, and he read evensong with us last night. Your husband has promised him a Latin Prayer Book, which I am sure he will value very much.

The journey by rail and along drowsy canals from Rotterdam through Gouda and Utrecht to Enkhuizen on the Zuyder Zee was full of pleasant memories and quaint experiences. The primitive patriarchal habits and the simple hospitality of his clerical hosts made a strong appeal to the Bishop of Newcastle, but I gather from his letter that he was less sanguine than his brother of Sarum as to any permanent results from the mission to the mere handful who comprised the Old Catholics of Holland.

It was one of his gifts to be able to differ without bitterness from those who failed to see eye to eye with him. Dean Hole of Rochester, like Bishop Magee, was apt to be outspoken on the subject of the violent language used by some of the more extreme 'temperance' advocates, and a sermon of his,¹ condensed and misreported, was erroneously made to bear reference to the platform work of the Bishop of Newcastle. The latter was moved to some words of protest, which evoked the following letter:—

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,—If 'to be wroth with those we love doth work like madness in the brain,' so in a lesser degree to differ with those we love doth work like sadness in the heart, and I feel constrained to tell you, by the first post which I have met since we parted, how much refreshed I was by the grasp of your brotherly hand, and the kindly sympathy of your earnest (oh, what a struggle it is to me not to put a dash under earnest) your earnest eyes. Our object is the same, tho' our methods differ. Did you hear

¹ Preached in November 1888.

that which I hear throughout the country from ‘godly and well-learned men’ as to the injury done to temperance by the self-righteous arrogance of what some call ‘the *teatotal* craze’ and others ‘the Manichean heresy’ I cannot doubt that we should differ less. Yours ever affectionately.

In the winter of 1888 the Bishop of Truro¹ was suffering from a severe break-down in health. Ernest Wilberforce volunteered to help him, and spent two or three weeks before Christmas in Cornwall. ‘Giving up all his own engagements,’ says Bishop Wilkinson’s biographer,² ‘he devoted himself to lightening his friend’s weary load, going about with him through the diocese and speaking for him at meetings with an eloquence enhanced by affectionate compassion.’ In Wilberforce’s own words, he was ‘absolutely a chattel in the hands of the Bishop of Truro.’

On New Year’s Eve the latter wrote affectionately to his brother of Newcastle, ‘We do not forget to remember you in our Chapel amongst those who have helped Cornwall and Cornwall’s Bishop this year. I hope that I shall never forget not merely what you did, but the way in which you did it.’ ‘God only knows,’ he added, in a letter to Mrs. Wilberforce, ‘how great a debt I owe to Ernest for all that he was to me when I was ill.’

One of the very few letters of Ernest Wilberforce’s on spiritual subjects which has come into my hands relates to this Cornish visit. It was in answer to a lady who in her own words

‘had written to thank him for the help given by his wonderful sermon on 1 Corinthians xv. 14 at

¹ The Right Rev. G. H. Wilkinson.

² Dr. A. J. Mason, Canon of Canterbury. See his *Life of Bishop Wilkinson*, ii. 189.

St. John's, Penzance, on Sunday evening, and I mentioned what a Godsend his father's life story had been to me when left suddenly a widow at the age of twenty-three—his diaries showing how the memory of her he had loved so deeply was ever with him and yet he bravely went on with his work for God cheerfully.'

The following was the Bishop's reply:—

. . . It is indeed a real pleasure if God has enabled me to be of any use to you in this matter ; and I am so thankful to know again and again of my dear father, that being dead he yet speaketh, and that lives are being influenced in many places by the simple record of his brave and noble life. I know well the feelings you describe : the well-meant words of consolation piercing like very swords, or being apparently utterly without meaning ; the gathering blackness of life when the mind wakes up after the stunning shock of the blow, the weary helplessness that seems to have come instead of the strong purpose of life. But, by degrees the Master leads you on, if you will let Him : He has many things to say unto us, but we cannot bear them now ; by degrees the light begins to feel *warmer* upon us, and He opens out the generous side of the character and bids us live for others and comfort others. How wonderful it is to find St. Paul, who had seen the Lord, who had heard the words not lawful to be uttered on earth, so many years after praying that he might know the *power* of his Master's resurrection ! not the fact, that he knew right well ; but the power. And I suppose some parts of that power would be expressed in the power of increasing knowledge and so of hope ; in the power of prayer and so of communion with God ; in the power of life, and of love. These are helpful points for meditation, and one great thought of strength to the believer is that Christ is the one great link between us and those who have gone before us. As in the Church triumphant *they* touch Him, and in the Church militant *we* touch Him, so do we touch each other through Him.

The same correspondent, writing to Mrs. Wilberforce a year or two after the Bishop's death, gives a pleasant picture of his kindly dealing with the younger clergy, and his unvarying tenderness to the aged and the poor.

I remember well your husband preferring to walk up the hill from Penzance, two miles, to the country church where he was to confirm, with Prebendary Hedgeland, then Vicar of Penzance; outside the church gate he was introduced to some of us and to Mr. Lewis, our curate, who had received Ordination from him. 'Ah, I must have you back,' he said. 'Pray don't, my Lord,' Mr. Hedgeland said, 'for he's doing a very good work here.' 'Is he? well, I suppose I must leave him,' the Bishop answered, looking so affectionately at young Mr. Lewis. The latter was working an outlying district on the moor and had brought several old people for confirmation, among others an aged man on crutches whom he helped into church and got into position by the altar-rails first, then rushing back for his other candidates, so the Bishop and old Needs were left *tête-à-tête*. I saw the Bishop whispering to him: he was emphatically crying, 'I do, I do!' and Mr. Lewis told me afterwards that the Bishop had asked him so kindly, 'Tell me, my man, do you really love the Lord Jesus?'

CHAPTER VIII

BISHOP OF NEWCASTLE—1882-1895 (*continued*)

Preaches the Gordon memorial sermon in St. Paul's—Seat in the House of Lords—Recreations—Fishing—Holidays in Norway—Reminiscences by Mr. Howard Fox—Family life at Benwell—Death of Dean Connor—Letter from Queen Victoria—Second visitation charge—The vast sum expended on Church work in the diocese—Unsectarian religion—Canon Gough's reminiscences of the Bishop.

IN the first days of February 1885 England was stirred to the depths by the news of the death of General Gordon; and the tragedy at Khartoum was accompanied and followed by a terrible list of casualties among the British expeditionary force. Dean Church, in concert with the Archbishop of Canterbury, appointed the morning of Friday, March 13, for a service of prayer and intercession to be held in St. Paul's Cathedral, and Bishop Wilberforce was invited to deliver the commemorative address which was to form part of the ceremony. The proposal had come, so the Dean wrote, from Archbishop Benson, whose letter he enclosed.

The Bishop of Truro (so it ran) is staying here¹; he suggested at breakfast how good it would be, if you could not preach, to follow the precedent by which the youngest Bishop in the House of Lords preaches on

¹ At Lambeth.

some national occasion to the House at Westminster—and to invite to St. Paul's the Bishop of Newcastle, who has just taken his seat. As a friend of Mr. Gladstone's he would be sure to make no political touch—and his very good taste and style and gentleness of handling would fit so delicate an occasion. I am not so certain of the touch of another friend who might thunder some luckless words of defence at an inopportune moment. The Bishop of Truro is very clear as to Bishop Wilberforce's tact.

On the Friday morning a vast congregation filled the choir and nave, though a similar service was to be held later in the day at the Abbey. The Princess of Wales and the King of Greece occupied seats in the stalls; the Lord Mayor and the Corporation were present in state, and all classes, including a number of well-known soldiers and Members of Parliament, were represented beneath the dome. After the first part of the Burial Service, and after Spohr's anthem 'Blest are the departed,' Bishop Wilberforce preached from St. John xii. 24.¹

This was not a time for much speaking (he said), but rather for deep prayer with earnest reaching out to God for ability to read aright His message to their individual souls. Yet strangely blended feelings moved in them that day. Proud joy was looking out of sorrowful eyes. The noble lives of those we mourned lit up the darkness of the clouds that hung so thickly over many. What lesson do the lives which England has given in the Soudan—aye and elsewhere—teach us here and now? For I would remember all; that one man on whom the eyes of England were fixed so long, and who died, as we believe, at last beneath the

¹ 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.'

withering kiss of treachery;¹ and the one unknown to fame under whose loss a lowly mother's head is whitening, or a father's life is bowing down towards the grave, or some woman's heart is breaking, or some home is overshadowed where he was once the joy, the pride, the life—all, combatant and non-combatant, those dead upon the field of battle, face towards the foe, and those who have gone down beneath the death clasp of disease or the fell exhaustion of fatigue, or who have met a glorious end in the very act of rendering assistance to others. As by the subtle touch of some master hand upon the canvas, the words in the text seem to grow into life before us as the events of the last few months in that distant land crowd in upon our memories. They teach us first that life not death proclaims the hero; life realised, life imparted, life that bears a harvest of which much fruit is written here on earth as in heaven above. What makes the hero? In all ages, under every teaching, men had been found who welcomed death or had endured it with a strange tranquillity. Of death it might be said, *finis coronat opus*; yet death ever leads to fuller life. Here life assimilates and life transmits. Hence the joy of infecting others with enthusiasm or of injecting into dull minds and stagnant hearts high hopes and noble aspirations. So wherever he went such a man as Charles George Gordon was found to be contagious. So those most critical of all classes, the London poor, and the inhabitants of divers and far separate lands alike acknowledged his supremacy and paid instinctive homage to the strange power of his radiating life. Men label such a man sometimes 'eccentric,' and the little dwellers in the mud will, ever harmlessly, assail him. Yet God be thanked for the men who lived so high that they could do what Gordon did in China, and say as he did, 'I know I shall leave China as poor as I entered it, but with the knowledge that

¹ The details of Gordon's death were not correctly known in England for some months.

through my weak instrumentality from 80,000 to 100,000 lives have been spared.' Of such a man it might be said with simple truth :—

'Unbounded courage and compassion joined
Tempering each other in the victor's mind,
Alternately proclaim him good and great
And make the hero and the man complete.'

... Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend. The yielded life bears fruit. That life, those lives, must infallibly produce a harvest whether we live to see it or not. Should we not pray that in His own good time, and possibly by ways concealed from us at present, God will use those deaths to crown with greater fruit the blessed gospel of His Son? God was a living factor in all Gordon's calculations. In January 1884 he wrote, 'Thus for Egypt he is working out His wonderful embroidery of events; those events are nothing, but the actions in men's hearts are everything.' Of old one bowed himself, and in his death prevailed more mightily over his surrounding foes than had ever been his lot in the glorious noontide of his strength: so might that death, those deaths, now colour all that long 'embroidery' till it shall cover all the land of Egypt. In that land of deepest mystery where still the moving sands refuse to unveil the secrets of the long buried past, that land whose earlier Christianity was once engulfed beneath the dark advancing flood of fierce fanaticism, there might God give an abundant harvest to that glorious crop whose seed had come from English homes and English hearts. In His own time and way might He ordain that one result should be a fuller truer life for the dwellers in that country where those precious lives were yielded, that the blight and curse which slavery entails may one day be removed; that peace and freedom may flourish in all those borders, and that the love of Jesus and the Sanctifying Power of the Holy Spirit may water and enrich the regions that are thirsting for a God.

The time was further off than the preacher may have imagined, for at that date the fiat had not gone forth for the withdrawal of the British troops from the Soudan; nor in its fullest sense, the evangelisation of the dusky myriads of the Nile Provinces, have his aspirations yet received even the beginning of fulfilment. But within less than fourteen years he was to witness the complete overthrow of the tyranny of the Mahdi and the Khalifa, the abolition of slavery, and the establishment, under Gordon's countrymen, of peace and freedom such as the Soudan had never known in all its troubled history. Thus, rather than by the stricken field of Omdurman, was the great Christian soldier 'avenged.' And the memorial service held on that September Sunday in 1898 in the garden of the ruined palace at Khartoum was the supplement to the solemn ceremony in St. Paul's, and an echo of the tears and prayers which found noble expression in the words which I have just quoted.

His seat in the House of Lords was a gratification to Ernest Wilberforce. It gave him the opportunity of assisting by his vote the great social causes which were so dear to his heart, and it revived innumerable memories of his father, who had found it so congenial an arena. But he lacked the 'superb aggressiveness' of 'Samuel Oxon,' and he had no ambition to emulate his achievements in debate. Though pressed on more than one occasion by Archbishop Benson to speak on topics, such as marriage with a deceased wife's sister, which closely affected the discipline of the Church, he preferred to remain a silent member; yet his brief intervention in the discussion on the Education Bill of 1902¹ showed that neither in point of matter or manner was he deficient

¹ See Hansard, 4th series, cxvi. 794, 895.

in the qualities of a Parliamentarian. His enforced attendance when the duty devolved upon him of reading the daily prayers in the House of Lords clashed very seriously with his engagements in his distant diocese. He did not see his way, however, to the drastic measures adopted by Bishop Ridding, who, on his accession to the post of junior Bishop in 1888, flatly 'struck,' and brought about a rearrangement of duty by which the whole of the Bench of Bishops took their turn of duty in Parliament. The innovation was the source of some not unnatural annoyance among the older Bishops, who had, each in his turn, gone through the experience to which their junior brother declared himself unequal; and this appears in a letter from Bishop Claughton to Ernest Wilberforce, who was trying his best to arrange for such a shift as might least interfere with his own diocesan work.

I will do anything in the way of exchange or compromise with any other Bishop save him of Southwell, to whom we are indebted for all this trouble and confusion.¹

We get a further glimpse of the general derangement in the following letter from Archbishop Benson to Wilberforce himself, which I print as a model of affectionate reproach.

Addington Park,
Croydon,
Nov. 1, 1889.

MY DEAR BISHOP,

I know you will not be offended at a gentle and respectful remonstrance.

In deference to the wishes of one or more of the

¹ It is only fair to Bishop Ridding, himself engaged, like Ernest Wilberforce, in building up a new diocese, to say that the arrangement forced by him upon his brethren has worked smoothly, and to the general convenience of the Episcopal Bench.

Junior Bishops the whole body of the Bishops took on themselves again the duty which many of them had already discharged of reading prayers in the House. Many had given long time to it; the Bishop of St. David's,¹ *e.g.*, five years' service. It was understood that if seniors took a fortnight or a month, juniors would divide the rest among themselves.

If you, my dearest Bishop, choose for yourself four weeks in which you cannot possibly be called upon—the only way of providing for that working fortnight or month which you repudiate is to lay on the Bishop of Lincoln,² who has already five existing weeks, your two or four—or to leave it until the oldest Bishops, as I have known them do, volunteer for it. Will you not be one of the *βαστάζοντες τὰ πάντων βάρη*?

Do forgive me if I say a word I ought not.

Your affectionate

E. W. CANTUAR.

It is scarcely necessary to add—the terms of the letter imply it—that a warm friendship existed between the Metropolitan and his Diocesan. The former, with Mrs. Benson, was an honoured and welcome visitor at Benwell Tower, entering with all his great natural zest for enjoyment into the happy family life, keenly interested in the historical associations of the neighbourhood, and prompt to appreciate the vigour and energy of his host.

Your work in Newcastle is splendid (he wrote enthusiastically after one of these visits), and I should like to have the tip of the nail of my little finger in it, as you kindly offer,³ and besides I should like to do

¹ Bishop Basil Jones. I well remember that my father, whose own turn as junior Bishop only lasted for a few weeks in 1869, relieved him of it for a couple of months in the summer of 1880.

² Bishop King.

³ The offer was an invitation to the Newcastle Diocesan Conference of 1888, which the Archbishop, through stress of engagements, was compelled to decline,

anything you ask in acknowledgment of all your kindness and for other reasons too. . . . I do heartily hope that skies and fish favour you.

Any account of Bishop Wilberforce would be imperfect which made no reference to what, during later years, was the one great relaxation of his life and the main occupation of his holidays. English prelates have not hunted, to the best of my knowledge, since the days when good Bishop Juxon solaced himself for the downfall of the Monarchy by keeping a pack of hounds, the best, according to Whitelocke, in the country. Earlier in the same century Archbishop Abbot had caused grave scandal by an unhappy accident with the cross-bow, and I am acquainted with no instance of the episcopal use of the fowling-piece, whether the modern breech-loader or the 'Joe Manton' of a by-gone generation.¹ But the rod lies under no interdict, and the Bishop of Newcastle, who had been a keen and good shot in his younger days, remained a most persistent and a very skilful fisherman to the end of his life. There was no surer road to his approval than a request to see his fly-book, and his holiday letters to his wife form a regular angler's chronicle, mixed with expressions of contrition for his selfishness in leaving her behind. The salmon he looked upon as personal enemies against whom he waged relentless war; but much of his enjoyment was derived from the opportunities afforded him of watching the bird and insect life on the river bank or on the stream itself. The love of natural history in all its branches, which he inherited

¹ Though the late Bishop McDougall of Labuan, afterwards a peaceful English Archdeacon, showed that a Christian Bishop would not hesitate to use his rifle in defence of the lives and honour of his flock against the merciless Dyak head-hunters.

from his father, gave an interest to the dulllest walk or the most familiar country.

I remember one day (writes his lifelong friend, the Rev. C. W. Wilson, Rector of Lapford, to Mrs. Wilberforce), when Mr. Mark Rolle kindly gave him permission to fish his waters on the Taw, he had at first no luck, but in the course of the afternoon caught two lovely salmon, each weighing over twenty pounds, and I had one; when we got back to the Rectory it was dark and he affected great disappointment, but a little while after he goes out into the garden, brings in, one after the other, three grand fish, and laying them on the tiles in the hall, he deliberately stretched himself full length between them, and was intensely delighted at the astonished amusement of you and of my wife at the way in which he had taken you in. There was in him the fullest appreciation of fun of all sorts; when he asked us to come out and see you in Norway and told me to bring my salmon tackle I asked him what I had better bring to keep off mosquitos, and with a face perfectly serious he said 'Well! really, I hardly know what is best, for I have tried everything, and the other day, whilst I was fishing, a great green mosquito settled on a tree on the bank and watched me; seizing his opportunity, he pounced on my leg, and, having possessed himself of a portion of it, he went back to his tree and quietly, there and then, in my presence devoured it—what can you do with such animals? How can I advise you?' He was a keen and clever fisherman, and his patience was most marvellous. One day under some wide-spreading trees on the banks of the Taw, a fish was rising on the opposite side of the river; he tried some half-dozen and more flies and never left the place till he got the fish, notwithstanding the extreme difficulty of throwing a fly under these trees—none of us ever attempted to try for a salmon there, but he never liked to be baulked in anything he attempted to do.

The fishing expeditions to Norway became an annual fixture very shortly after the Bishop's appointment to Newcastle. The heavy load of labour and anxiety rendered a complete change of scene, at least once a year, most desirable, and it was part of the cure to be free from the tyranny of posts and correspondence and interviews. In conjunction with his Benwell neighbour, Mr. John Pease, he rented a share in a stretch of salmon fishing on the Olden river, and here, in a charmingly situated wooden house, at the extreme end of the valley, the Bishop took up his quarters year after year. He was accompanied at first by Mrs. Wilberforce, but as the family grew up, conflicting duties detained her in England, and friends or relatives used to join him for fishing and companionship. The following reminiscences from the pen of Mr. Howard Fox, brother-in-law to Mr. Pease, give a picture of the happy surroundings in which the Bishop sought relief from work and worry.

He had built a most commodious house in the centre of the property,¹ and over the mountain-side opposite the front door a magnificent cataract rushed in a mass of foam with increasing roar. The salmon pools lie between the Foss at the foot of the lower lake and the fjord, and are all within about a mile from the house, as the crow flies, though the river has several turns, rushes through some rapids, and opens out with broader spaces here and there. The salmon caught during a season average about 20 lbs. each, and Mr. Pease once caught a sea trout of the same weight.

As it is useless to fish for salmon when the sun is on the water, there were certain off days of continuous sunshine or extremely low water, when the Bishop would introduce us to some of the glories of the district. One excursion was to the foot of the Brixdal Glacier

¹ This is a mistake on the part of Mr. Fox; the house had been built by the lessor, Mr. Byron.

which supplied most of the water that fed the river. Another famous excursion was to walk over the morains of boulders and sand to the foot of the steep mountain down which the cataract fell, climb up to the point over which it made its almost perpendicular fall, and walk miles beyond over the fjeld to a lonely lake. The air was here so exhilarating, the wild fruits and berries so acceptable, and the mountain flowers so new and bright, that some of us could almost understand the feelings of the visitor who after many unsuccessful hours with his rod in the oppressive air of the valley said 'Olden would be a delightful place, if it were not for the salmon fishing'! Dominating the entire lower valley is a mountain several thousand feet high called 'Cicely Krone'; near the summit is a white patch of glacier, which has to be crossed and is a notable feature of the landscape for miles round. On one of his visits the Bishop ascended this mountain, and reached the valley again in time to catch a salmon before dinner. There seemed to be no limit to his magnificent physical powers.

On Sundays he would visit some of the farmers, and was so popular that many of the younger folk would sit for hours on the grass opposite the house on the chance of seeing some of the party. The Bishop said he could not feel easy if he omitted Morning and Evening Prayer, so we had it daily after breakfast and dinner. He would say 'Pease, you will kindly read the lessons.'

The head gillie was a man of great intelligence and fond of reading; he spoke English and sang English hymns. He was the spokesman for the valley on public or important occasions. The Bishop became very intimate with him, and rendered him invaluable service in encouraging him to resist certain tendencies which, not unnaturally, tempt the more cultured folk during the long Norwegian winter.

For several consecutive years Mr. Pease took the Olden river for the last six weeks of the season, but in 1899 his health prevented his going to Norway, and he offered the sole use of the river to the Bishop, who

accepted it and pressed me in the kindest manner to join him as his guest. I had, however, engaged a house for my wife and daughter on the north coast of Cornwall and reluctantly declined. I then received the following gem of a letter; I hardly know how I was able to say no to so undeserved and flattering an appeal.

‘DEAR HOWARD FOX,—Now please don’t treat me thus! You know your ladies would have spared you to Pease, why should they not spare you to me? I am afraid it is because “I am me!” I have set my heart on your coming with me; I should delight to have you as my companion; you really must not say me nay. Do come, I really won’t be objectionable. My wife was so pleased when she heard that I hoped to have you. “He will be a charming companion,” she said; there! If these good ladies won’t spare you to me, *bring them with you*, why not? Now seriously, do please come. If you don’t like to be away so long, come for a shorter time. We should naturally reach Olden on August 4. If you can’t stay longer, even a fortnight would be something, and if you left Olden on August 18 you would be in Hull on August 21 early and might be at home that night. Stay longer if possible, but at any rate stay till the 18th. Now you can’t have the heart to refuse me this; please write and say yes.

‘Yours sincerely,

‘ERNEST R. CICESTR.’

It cost the Bishop no small effort to tear himself even for a few weeks¹ of hard-earned and necessary recreation from that home which was never absent from his thoughts and prayers, and which became with every year that passed an increasing joy and solace to him. A third daughter² had been born at Winchester, and

¹ During the last years of his life the Norway holiday was more and more curtailed, sometimes lasting for little more than a fortnight.

² Emily Geraldine. A fourth daughter died in April 1889, surviving her birth by only two days. _

the nursery circle was enlarged during his time at Newcastle by the birth of two boys.¹ No children had ever a fonder or a prouder father. And no one ever really knew Ernest Wilberforce who had not seen him in their midst. The strong self-contained nature was dissolved and thawed at the touch of little hands, the sound of little voices. As they grew up the Bishop was the partner of their joys and sorrows, their work and their play. Birthdays and Christmas-tide were as great a festival to him as to any of them, and he was an entranced spectator of the little plays which used to be produced year after year in the 'Tower Room' at Benwell on Canon Lloyd's birthday. 'I never shall forget those games at cricket and that big play room at Weymouth,' wrote a friend to Mrs. Wilberforce, 'nor those long walks when he carried his baby boy Victor by the sea coast for miles.' A clergyman who came to Benwell, on being offered an important living, and who was to meet his future Diocesan for the first time, found him at tea in the drawing-room with a small son on his knee, whose sticky fingers were eloquent of toast and jam. The neighbours whose house adjoined the Palace at Chichester were constantly enlivened by the shouts and peals of laughter which announced that the Bishop had snatched a few minutes for a romp in the garden with his boys and girls. 'They are dear children,' wrote the Dean of York,² 'and I only wish that their good and honoured grandfather could have seen them. He had always bright anticipations for his sons. I doubt if he forecasted anything brighter for you.'

But the early days at Benwell Tower were overcast

¹ Ernest Victor Samuel; William Robert Sargent.

² The Hon. the Rev. Arthur Purey Cust.

with a great bereavement. In October 1882 Mrs. Wilberforce's father, Canon Connor, was appointed to succeed Dean Wellesley at Windsor. The Deanery of Windsor is perhaps the most desirable piece of preferment in the Church of England, and it promised to draw still closer the ties which had attached the new Dean to his Royal Mistress during his thirty years' incumbency at Newport, the parish in which Osborne is situated. But he had no sooner entered on his new duties than his health gave way. He only once found strength to preach in St. George's Chapel, and on May 1 he died. To his son-in-law, scarcely less than to his daughter, the loss was irretrievable. Dean Connor had been on terms of affectionate intimacy with Bishop Samuel Wilberforce long before any thought of a family connection could have arisen. The Bishop's last ordination was held at Newport Church; he was the Vicar's guest during the examination week, and their evening rides together led invariably to a knoll on some high ground from which a glimpse could be caught of the church tower of Brighstone with all its memories of married happiness and of ineffaceable sorrow. To Ernest Wilberforce his father-in-law had been ever the truest of friends, the best of counsellors. His death left a gap which nothing could ever fill. It was some consolation to Mrs. Wilberforce to receive from Queen Victoria the following letter overflowing with womanly tenderness. The Queen and her children never forgot Dean Connor, and his daughter experienced many proofs of royal kindness and consideration. Together with her husband she was a frequent guest both at Windsor and at Osborne, and one of the first telegrams of sympathy after the Bishop's death came from King Edward.

Osborne,
May 1, 1883.

DEAR MRS. WILBERFORCE,—How *can* I find words to write to you and tell you *all* I feel on this dreadful occasion! We have all lost a dear kind friend;—but you and your brother mourn a most beloved parent, doubly dear if possible from having been the only one—as your mother was taken from you so early!

Mysterious indeed are God's ways and dispensations! The most useful, most necessary, most beloved are taken, and we are left to wander alone! I looked to your dear father as a great comfort and help to me when his dear old predecessor was taken, having known him so long and always liked him so much; and now in seven months he has also been taken from us all, at a time when his presence would have been so valuable.

You have a kind husband and a happy home—but your poor brothers¹ have not, and to them the blow must be terrible. You will, I know, do all you can for them.

Beatrice will write to you later; she wishes me in the meantime to express her very deep sympathy and regret, in which I know all my children will join. How deeply I grieve not to have been able, from my unfortunate accident, to see your kind father before we left, which Beatrice was able to do. Pray express to your husband and brothers how true and sincere my sympathy is.

Believe me always

Yours most affectionately and sympathisingly,
VICTORIA R.I.

So passed the life at Newcastle with its lights and shades, its trials and its joys. Each year seemed to bring an ever-increasing load of duties, but with them came the satisfaction of knowing that steady and faithful work was being done throughout the diocese, and that

¹ George A. Connor, Esq., and Capt. Harry Adams Connor, M.V.O., Chief Constable of the Isle of Wight.

the good seed was multiplying, some twenty, some sixty, some a hundred-fold.

In December 1891 Bishop Wilberforce held his second Visitation, delivering the charge on the 2nd in the cathedral at Newcastle, on the 3rd at Alnwick. With not unnatural pride he drew attention to the voluntary contributions which had been raised on behalf of the Church and its work during the four years which had elapsed since he last had rendered the accounts of his stewardship. Over and above the ordinary costs of maintenance there had been collected and spent in voluntary Church work during the period 1887-1890 the sum of just £230,000, almost the identical sum contributed during the first four years of his episcopate, at the end of which it had been prophesied that the limits of generosity had been reached and passed. The grand total of the sums voluntarily expended in the diocese since the formation of the Bishopric was £474,723, and large as the figures were they understated rather than exaggerated, so said the Bishop, the liberality and willing self-sacrifice of Churchmen.

I cannot but think that when attacks are made upon the Church, and the love and devotion of her members lightly considered, it is well that these facts should be made known, for such plain truths are amongst the best refutations of many of the garbled or erroneous statements in circulation concerning the English Church and her work. I do not wish to press the significance of these figures too far; they are, at best, the 'odour of the ointment,' that may 'fill the sanctuary,' and it is possible to have much activity and little real devotion, careful organisation and small spiritual achievement; yet it is clear that a continuing necessity for the enlargement and lengthening of the outside garments denotes an uninterrupted growth of the body within, while new wine requires new bottles.

The 'religious difficulty' with regard to elementary education, though it had not yet attained the proportions which it was to reach during the first decade of the present century, was already looming large, and in view of the part which the Bishop took in the situation created by the Education Act of 1902 it is important to make clear the position from which he never swerved in all the coming years of embittered controversy.

The future of our schools must cause some anxiety, for it seems as if those who look upon the Church with the eyes of dislike would leave no stone unturned to prevent the teaching of denominational religion in any school. . . . There is already a cry for 'local control' of all schools, which will certainly increase in strength before the next general election; this I fear would issue in a creedless religion being taught in all elementary schools; is this what England really desires? Here, I think, we may well make common cause with all denominations who possess schools, and who desire that their own religion shall be taught with definiteness in such schools. The association of voluntary school managers in Newcastle has already done much good in protecting the interests of denominational schools, without in any way trespassing upon the systems or the liberties of each other: and (as has already been done in the case of some of our schools) we may take the parents into our confidence, ask from them subscriptions, and when they are qualified, add representative parents to our school managers, thus strengthening the management and increasing the interest in carrying on the schools in the best manner possible, for unless our schools both give a first-rate secular instruction as well as a real grounding in the faith and practices of the Church of Christ, they cannot be long maintained. I trust there may be such a federation of Church schools throughout the diocese as will afford just such means of information, and will enable us to supply just such help as may be required from time to time, and will

assist us in keeping all our schools in a state of thorough efficiency. But I am inclined myself to go further, and to ask if there be no means whereby what is called the 'religious difficulty' may not at least be minimised. The 'conscience clause' has been strictly adhered to in our schools; no complaint has been made to me of any violation of that safeguard since I have been in the diocese. But in wide-spreading country parishes this does not seem to me fully to meet every difficulty; may I be pardoned for repeating, briefly, language used by me in public before, though aware that many of you will not be disposed to agree with me.

To towns, where parents have a considerable choice of schools, my words do not apply: but where in wide country districts there is but one school and that a Church school, I confess to great sympathy with the earnest and religious among the Nonconformists who wish their children to be taught religion during the week, but naturally do not wish that religion to be according to the faith of the Church of England. It does not seem to me to be sufficient answer to say to such that they can claim the protection of the conscience clause and teach their children at home or in the Sunday school. The same difficulty as to home teaching applies equally in the case of the children of Churchmen and Nonconformists: the insufficiency of a once-a-week religious teaching in the Sunday school is felt by all earnest people alike, and a remedy I venture to think is, that in the districts described, leave should be given when required for an accredited teacher to be sent to teach the children of such Nonconformist parents as may have children in the school, and may wish them to be taught on week days. The mere knowledge of power to do this would, I am persuaded, have a beneficent result, and where the permission was acted upon, it appears to me that the result would be good. And I feel sure that before long all who cannot be content with a colourless invertebrate religion from which every distinguishing dogma has been eliminated, a religion 'defecated to a pure transparency' calculated

to offend nobody, and therefore unsatisfying to all, will have to band together to secure for each other what they desire for themselves, perfect freedom to teach their own religion unfettered and free, in all its breadth and fulness, to yield to others what they claim for themselves, and to show how they value their own belief by the respect they pay to the convictions of others.

From the subject of religious teaching in schools the Bishop proceeded to speak on Confirmation. Comparing the four years since his former charge with the four years preceding it he found that 14,955 candidates had been confirmed at 234 centres as against 13,363 at 197. And he impressed on his audience the supreme importance of diligence and care in the preparation of candidates, of long and very patient pastoral dealing.

A careless Confirmation may mean a terrible hardening of the heart ; a Confirmation well prepared for will be one that brings a blessing from the God who is truly sought and found in that ordinance, a blessing that may be lifelong ; and surely it is a time when the young Churchman should be armed at all points, taught what are the claims, position, and place of the Church to which he belongs, so that in the future he may be fore-armed against the attacks that are certain to be made against his faith, whether these proceed from simple ignorance, from mistaken ideas, or from that political or bitter unreasoning prejudice of whose existence we cannot be ignorant. In some parishes I grieve to find that intending candidates for Confirmation are exposed to something near akin to persecution from those who differ from our teaching, and endeavour, in some instances only too successfully, to prevent their coming forward. How necessary then is it for all who have been confirmed, to show by their lives of loving patient service how God has blessed them ; the example of a

life is a thousandfold more convincing than argument, nothing influences lives so much as life.

It had been one of the main objects throughout his labours in the north to combat the individualism which was the inevitable result of centuries of neglect, to plant in his flock and more especially in his clergy the conviction that they were members of one body of the Church Catholic, not mere units striving alone in deserted corners but co-operators alike with the faithful of the past and of the future.

Our puny strength of will and purpose (he reminded them, as he closed the first portion of his charge) is backed by a mighty stream of power, is gathered into the almost irresistible force of corporate life ; what we want is more faith to enter into this truth, alike in prayer and practice. When on the deck of some great steamer labouring in a gale, you may have doubts if she can force her way against the rushing waves impelled by the mighty wind ; but as you stand within the engine room and see the steady work of the resistless engines and mark the rhythm of their unceasing action, you become convinced of the internal power, whatever may be the forces outside, and are able calmly to await the issue. So, if our faith were greater, we should see more plainly the working of the mighty purpose of God, and should be able day by day to serve Him better because more calmly ; to face our difficulties more easily because already we looked on beyond them to the certain issue, God's will our only guide.

At Alnwick he spoke strongly on the difficulties arising from the lamentable divisions in the Christian host itself. As regarded divisions among Churchmen he was thankful to know that there was little difficulty in his own diocese, and he declared his intention of discouraging to the utmost of his ability in the future

as in the past 'the bitter party spirit which alike hinders the spiritual life of the individual soul and dishonours the Church of God.' In speaking of the wider divisions which parted their own Communion from the various Nonconformist bodies and led to constant and unfair attacks upon the Church of England, its ordinances and its clergy, he counselled patience, toleration, and a full recognition of the elements of good and the points of truth to be found in the various denominations around them.

While there must be many matters in which we cannot work in common with those who do not agree with us, there must be and is, much ground on which we can meet in common. Is it not far better therefore to meet in brotherly concord on such perfectly common ground as that of which I speak, and then, when principles are involved which we can neither yield ourselves nor consistently ask others to resign, to part for our several work, meaning to come together again whenever such common ground as that to which I allude offers itself. The more strongly any man holds to the principles of his own religion, the more he respects the principles of others, the less he will be likely to assent to what appears to me to be one of the greatest shams of the day, namely what is called 'Unsectarian Religion,' which, if it means anything, implies a religion from which all that may offend others has been eliminated. But when such a process is complete, what remains? How can anyone who is in earnest, of whatever denomination he be, consent to cut out, water down, or mutilate any one of the great doctrines he holds dear, which he believes His Master and the Apostles taught, and this for the sake of an utterly unreal and therefore unlasting union?

When great distinctive principles are eliminated faith is unable to withstand the shock of a clever confident argumentative attack. Our duty is to stand in the old paths, to take dogmatic teaching as it fell from

the lips of Christ and His Apostles ; to turn upon it the exegesis of the first three centuries when doctrine had suffered neither from loss nor from accretion, using as well the best of the many modern and most scholarly helps, and quietly to disestablish error by establishing truth. And here the Church's own methods should surely be followed, some of which, alas, are only too commonly now laid aside as antiquated. For instance, how little public catechising there is in our Churches ! No doubt it is harder to catechise so as to instruct and interest than to preach a sermon ; long ago St. Basil said ' A child can preach, but it takes a man to catechise.' Yet what a vast power against error is voluntarily given up if public catechising be altogether neglected, or practised only at such times as it is impossible for the bulk of the congregation to be present. The public catechising of well-taught children, by a clergyman himself carefully prepared, at certain stated times during Morning or Evening Service, and followed by a very brief address, in which the principal points should be gathered up and stated a little more fully for the edification of the elders of the congregation, would, I believe, tend very much to the re-establishment amongst us of the old dogmatic truths before whose bar these specious forms of modern teaching could be instantly arraigned, tried, and sentenced. A few years of plain teaching of such truths would increase life as well as knowledge in the Church.

The Bishop's sound common-sense comes out in the practical suggestion that ' in many cases almost the greatest help that could be given to a country clergyman would be the provision and maintenance of a strong pony, by which his powers of locomotion would be vastly increased.'

The incomes of the clergy, conspicuously inadequate in many parts of Northumberland, were always a subject of the deepest concern to the Bishop, and on their

behalf he pleaded for the general revival of the old custom of Easter Offerings, which he wished to see a general practice throughout the diocese.

The collections on Easter Day would thus be devoted to the private use of the clergy of the parish; rich and poor could contribute alike, and none need know what his neighbour either gives or withholds. The gift would be offered to God for the use of the clergy, in the spirit of the donor would the gift be received.

This public expression of the wish and hope of their Diocesan was not without its effect on the faithful laity of Newcastle. During his Chichester episcopate Bishop Wilberforce was enabled to carry out in a systematic fashion the scheme which he now outlined.¹ And in view of another phase of the life that was before him, in the southern diocese, the following passage is significant and almost prophetic.

Of the case ‘Read and others v. the Lord Bishop of Lincoln’ it would not be fitting to speak at present, the case being still *sub judice*. It is, however, in my opinion a matter of much congratulation that the right of the Bishop’s Veto, under the Public Worship Regulation Act, has been established in the St. Paul’s Reredos Case. Such a right would certainly be only used according to the Bishop’s discretion, if, after due consideration of the whole circumstances of the particular case before him, he considered it to be one not necessary or fitting to be brought into Court. But it appears to me to be a distinct gain that a Bishop cannot be compelled, however unwillingly, to allow the floodgates of litigation to be opened upon a parish, and that, possibly, at the instigation of those who may not be the wisest or the most learned of the parishioners.

¹ *Vide infra*, p. 229.

This was destined to be the Bishop's last Visitation charge to the clergy of Northumberland. He had now been set over them for nearly ten years, and he had crowded into that period of glorious strife the work of a lifetime. The pioneer does not always receive his full credit, but Bishop Jacob, who followed him in the see of Newcastle, gives the strongest testimony as to the spadework accomplished by his predecessor.

The foundations (he writes to me) had been so well laid that I needed only to develop what he had begun. A Diocesan Society had been established on sound lines. The various diocesan agencies simply needed development and maintenance, and the state of the Church in Northumberland when I succeeded my friend was wholly different from what he must have found.

Canon Lloyd, who, as I have already mentioned, was the successor of Bishop Jacob, strikes a different note : from his appointment as Vicar of Newcastle in 1882 down to his consecration as Bishop Suffragan of Thetford ¹ in 1894 he had been Wilberforce's right-hand man.

MY DEAREST BISHOP (he wrote on the last Sunday, as he imagined, of his ministry in the north),—I have given up the charge now that God gave me through you. I have often thanked Him that He called me here. Twelve such happy years of work I shall never look to have again. Certainly I shall never have a Bishop nor

¹ A passage in the letter to his Diocesan, in which Canon Lloyd weighs the pros and cons of the acceptance of that post, is interesting as marking a phase in our ecclesiastical policy which has now become ancient history. 'Tho' I do not suppose or ever have supposed that what you and others have sometimes told me about the offer of an English Bishopric is ever distantly likely to approach probability, still the merest possibility of such a thing happening made me shudder. And the very fact that the Suffragan Bishopric would close the door would incline me strongly to accept the offer.'

a Bishop's wife to be to me anything like you have been. I can never thank you enough. It has been to me like home.

Canon Lloyd's place at St. Nicholas was filled by the present Vicar, Canon Gough, under whom the cathedral continued to be a great and ever-growing power in the city and diocese. And with him, as with Canon Lloyd, the happiest relations were maintained by the whole Wilberforce family. The impression made upon him by the Bishop can best be given in his own words.

I should say that he had the rare faculty of making men rise to their best by absolutely trusting them. He inspired self-confidence by giving freely his own confidence. He would put a man into an important post, and remove all misgivings by showing that he himself had none. It was impossible not to do one's best to justify such encouraging optimism. Consequently, I think, he got from the men who served under him the very best that each man could give. Each man tried to do, and be, what his Bishop thought him capable of, and expected him to be. In other words, Bishop Wilberforce was a born leader of men.

At the same time he was the gentlest of leaders: a true leader, never a driver. Was a man ill, or overworked, the first to find it out would be his Bishop; the first, too, to insist upon his getting a rest, often giving, or providing, the means for doing so. No man ever spared himself less, or his workers more. Many a time the Bishop has gone into a town, or country, parish, and taken himself the whole Sunday duty, like a simple priest, in order to give a Sunday's rest to a tired Vicar.

If a man was ill his first visitor was sure to be his Bishop, with cheery words, and the injunction 'not to worry' at his bedside. Once when I was on a visit to him at Chichester I chanced to be laid up for a day

or two, and found out his wonderful qualities as a nurse. Strength blended with gentleness was, I should say, his great characteristic.

As a preacher, the Bishop was always interesting, and often impressive. I remember the sermon he preached in St. Paul's Cathedral at the Memorial Service for General Gordon, before he was personally known to me. In our own cathedral, and in the churches of this diocese, he was always welcomed as a preacher whose manly, straightforward utterances gave the impression that he was inculcating what he himself was trying to do and be. At the same time again and again I have known him deprecate being asked to preach, suggesting some popular preacher instead, and saying 'You know a Bishop has no time to prepare sermons.' But his own preaching was from the life, and experience of life, and therefore went home more effectively than many elaborately prepared sermons.

The Bishop much disliked affectation of any kind. He would describe little mannerisms in the conduct of Divine Service with a pungent criticism: I think they offended his sense of gentlemanliness and good taste. He liked a common-sense and manly bearing in religion and in its exercises, especially in the celebration of Holy Communion, and disliked what seemed to him effeminate or affected. At the same time he was very tolerant of ceremonial, even when it went beyond his personal tastes, if he saw reality and devotion behind it. It was not external actions, but the spirit in which they were done, and from which they issued, that moved him to approval or disapproval.

In matters of doctrine there is no doubt that the Bishop was a sound Church of England man. The Book of Common Prayer was his standard of faith and practice. To that he expected all his clergy loyally to conform, without excesses, and without defects. Consequently there arose in the new diocese over which for its first thirteen years he presided, a sober standard of Churchmanship, which for the most part exists there still. Of course there were, and are, 'excesses' and

'defects'; but few dioceses perhaps presented so even a standard, at any rate in Bishop Wilberforce's time. A clergyman from a distance (whom he afterwards brought into his diocese to fill an important post) was asked to preach a Mission in a certain parish, and very naturally laid his views on some matters of personal dealings with individuals, before the Vicar, asking whether he would have a free hand in this respect in the conduct of the Mission. The Vicar, in some doubt, submitted the Missioner's letter to the Bishop. The Bishop's reply was characteristic. 'Mr. ——'s teaching is the teaching of the Church of England; if you cannot accept it, you cannot ask him to conduct a Mission in your parish.' The Vicar accepted at once the Bishop's ruling, and invited the Missioner.

Let me add to these an extract from a letter written by Sir Benjamin Browne to Mrs. Wilberforce, and giving a layman's view of the first Bishop of Newcastle.

Directly your husband came we saw and recognised a leader who was ever present, who at once secured our allegiance; we at once looked to him as our friend, and chief. He thought for us, taught us and led us, and we leaned on and loved him. He converted a well-disposed mob into a loyal earnest army, made us feel our own strength, and (though it seems an anomaly) it was by teaching us self-reliance that he gained our allegiance. We felt an electric sympathy with every other congregation and with every other diocese. Instead of being a number of separate parishes we are now a Church of which the rural deaneries and parishes are the divisions and sub-divisions.

This was by no means his only special work. He interested us in all sorts of work both in, and out of, the diocese. Of course his work, both through the 'Bishop of Newcastle's Fund' and outside it, was very great and enduring. The darkest and coldest corners of the diocese felt the life and warmth, and the average

Christian realised not only that he must not live to himself, even in his faith in a Communion with God, but that he had a duty in awakening, stirring up, and helping others, far as well as near, and that he must uphold and support whatever was true, noble and holy. It was what the Bishop came to do and he did it well.

CHAPTER IX

LAST DAYS AT NEWCASTLE—1895

Influenza and its effects—Offer of the See of Chichester—Acceptance—
Regrets throughout the Newcastle diocese—Some typical letters—
Ernest Wilberforce's generosity to the poorer clergy—His appli-
cation of the testimonial funds—Farewell sermon.

TOWARDS the end of his time at Newcastle it was obvious that the long, continuous strain was beginning to tell upon the Bishop ; the burden of responsibility which ever grew with the growth of Church life and activity came to press more heavily upon his shoulders, and there can be no doubt that his tremendous activity, his delight in exercise for its own sake, and his pride in his own physical prowess led him to overtax his strength and to play tricks with his constitution from which it never completely recovered. The year 1890 was the first in that cycle of influenza outbreaks from which we do not seem, even now, to have emerged. The Bishop was one of the early victims, and he always remained susceptible to attacks of this dangerous and most depressing malady. Each successive year the Northumbrian winter and spring seemed to grow more rigorous and less tolerable, and the Bishop's health became a source of anxiety and remonstrance to all who loved him. Bishop Wilkinson, who had himself been driven to resign the see of Truro by a mysterious

illness, the origin of which was traceable to overwork, gave him a series of friendly admonitions, which included such very practical remedies as ‘(1) to have a *real* rest one day in seven (if possible in bed till luncheon); (2) to get out a shorthand writer from Newcastle.’

Another letter, coming as it does from a Winchester schoolboy of seventeen, will help us to understand the terms of mutual affection and confidence on which the parents and children lived the daily life at Benwell Tower.

Private. May 19, 95.

MY DARLING FATHER,—Thank you very much for your letter. . . . I wish you hadn't been so terribly busy last holidays for I don't seem to have seen anything of you all the time, but next holidays we will make up for it; and in the meanwhile I want *you* to take a little holiday. I couldn't help noticing when I was at home, that you didn't seem at all well and that you hadn't got properly strong again from that horrid influenza; and I am sure that the only way to get properly well is to go away for a bit on a sea voyage or some other little trip. I know how everyone is bothering you to do so, and how unpleasant the idea of it is to you, who don't like giving in to anything, least of all, to doctors and suchlike. . . . I know what a strong will and what indomitable pluck you have, and how you love to stand up against anything, however strong it is, and that in the end you generally overcome all difficulties; but influenza is no common kind of illness; it affects the strongest men most and leaves them weaker than those who are naturally weak.

Do forgive me writing in this fatherly way to you—but I do it out of my own love to you, my darling Father, and out of love for Mother, for I don't think you can tell how sad she is at your being so unwell. I know this is all stale advice that I have written, for so many men, and all of them knowing so much more than I do, have told you just the same thing, but, as they have so

far failed, I thought that I would try and persuade you, and I hope and pray I may not have written in vain. Don't be angry with me for writing this letter but do think it over seriously, and I pray God that you may think it right to take a good rest. And now good-bye, darling Father, with very much love. Ever your devoted son ROLAND.

P.S.—I put 'private' at the beginning as I thought you would like to read it through by yourself first.

Possibly this appeal was decisive ; at any rate ten days later I find one of the Bishop's examining chaplains¹ expressing his profound sorrow at reading in the paper 'that it is thought necessary for you to go to America in order to recruit your health and strength. . . . The work you have to do, and do, is prodigious. Only one of the strongest and most resolute of men could accomplish it.' The short holiday was taken more for the sake of the voyage than for anything else, but the Bishop had many friends in the United States, and the proverbial hospitality of our cousins across the sea was extended as freely as on his previous visits ; yet there was a fly in the ointment, and in his overwrought condition he found the off-hand manners and incivility of the coloured gentlemen who preside in the 'cars' more intolerable than ever. 'I hadn't been in the country half an hour,' he said, 'before I began seriously to regret the share my grandfather had taken in the liberation of the slaves!!!'

He returned from America refreshed in mind and body, and was speedily immersed in the press of diocesan engagements. But those who knew him best were aware that the malady had been scotched rather than cured, and looked forward with dread to what the

¹ The Rev. I. Waite, Vicar of Norham.

winter might bring. Their anxiety was relieved by the action of Lord Salisbury, who had become Prime Minister for the third time in the previous June. The venerable Bishop Durnford had passed away at Basle on October 14, in his 92nd year, and on November 6 the Premier wrote from Hatfield in the following terms :—

MY DEAR LORD,

I have been informed by authority which I cannot but look upon as good, that you would be disposed, if the opportunity offered, to change your present diocese for one in which the climate is less severe. If that be the case, I have the Queen's permission to ask whether you would accept translation to the vacant see of Chichester. The climate is good, and the county is one in which you have an hereditary interest, and where you would for that as well as for other reasons be cordially welcomed. If my information has misled me I have only to ask you to forgive me for intruding on your time. Believe me,

Yours faithfully,

SALISBURY.

Attractive as the offer was, it may well be doubted if Ernest Wilberforce would have quitted Newcastle but for the imperative consideration of his health. Though he had thirteen years of a Bishop's life behind him, he was only fifty-five. His reputation as an administrator and organiser was steadily growing; the diocese was in vigorous working order; the people had become more and more attached to him and he to them; open enemies and lukewarm friends had been converted into warm allies, and every year opened up a prospect of conquest and achievement in fresh fields. But in the circumstances he felt he had no alternative but to accept. His reply to the Prime Minister has not been preserved, but on November 12

the latter wrote 'I am very glad that you have come to this conclusion, and I am sure it will be accepted with great satisfaction in the diocese of Chichester.' The formal announcement of the impending event was delayed for nearly a fortnight; but these secrets are apt to leak out through many channels, and public opinion in Northumberland was violently agitated until doubt was set finally at rest in a letter from the Bishop to his two Archdeacons.

I am now free to announce to you officially the fact of my approaching translation to the see of Chichester, and through you to make the formal announcement to the diocese; you will, I feel sure, readily understand that I write this letter with very mingled feelings. But having duly weighed the offer, which comes to me entirely unsought, and having taken counsel with those best able to assist me in forming a right judgment, I have been led to accept it. It will not be necessary for me now to enter into details at any length. We shall, I hope, have yet many opportunities of meeting before the last words are spoken, and the separation complete. But I cannot even think of severing my connection with the diocese without deep regret, a diocese as rich in old historic association as it is instinct with modern energetic life. A diocese responding so readily to all true and faithful work done in it and for it, and one which with its people I have learned heartily to love—a diocese where I have received such ungrudging support from both clergy and laity, and where such generous consideration has ever been extended to my many shortcomings; and yet I believe the decision is right.

Side by side with this public announcement may be placed a letter written by him shortly afterwards in reply to one from Archdeacon Henderson expressing regret at his approaching departure, and wishing

him as happy and useful an Episcopate in his new sphere as he had in the old one. Its terms will help to explain how strong were the personal ties which had established themselves between Ernest Wilberforce and his clergy.

I feel it very hard to answer such a loving letter as yours lest I should say too much, for indeed I do most deeply feel leaving such dear fellows behind me, whose love I value, whose work I appreciate, and whose sympathy and kindness I have leant upon greatly and which I shall miss more than I can say. It makes me feel quite traitorous in leaving the diocese, and yet I believe it is for the best. Jacob is indeed a splendid man; and you will all value and love him, and he will be able, under God, to carry on the work to a far higher pitch than ever I could. That we have been permitted to do what we have done, has made it, we may humbly say, possible for him to do so. And it *was* hard work at first, wasn't it? Often misunderstood, sometimes misrepresented and opposed—when friends had not been gained and the Church was weak. Now it is changed, *Laus Deo*. But it has been changed mainly by the work and help of men like yourself and Lloyd, and I do most heartily thank God for your public work and for all the private help you have given me both as Chaplain and otherwise. I fear I can never again love a diocese and its clergy as I love this one. But you will be to Jacob what you have been to me, I know. God bless and keep you and yours.

On all sides rose the chorus of mingled congratulation and regret. From the Bishop's most trusted lieutenants down to the incumbents of the poorest and most remote parishes came the same testimony, couched often in the very same words. 'We shall never again get such a brother for our Bishop' was the common burden. 'The constant sense of your unvarying kind-

ness has been the greatest support to my weak and trembling character,' wrote one of the parochial clergy ; and another declared that 'your successor will but reap the harvest of your self-denying and instructed exertions.' An interesting tribute came from a former member of his flock, the Rev. C. M. Woosnam, sometime Archdeacon of Macclesfield.

I must just say a word of deep gratitude to you for all you did for me when I was an unruly young vicar. As I look back I feel I could have done so much better if I had only realised many of the things you used to say to me, but I was, and am, slow to learn. I often wonder at your gentleness with me, but the text you once gave me when I was in distress was the spirit in which you dealt with me. 'Thy gentleness hath made me great.'

All that the diocese is, you have made it (wrote the Rev. Herbert S. Hicks), and when I look back to what it was 13 years ago and think of the vitality you have infused into it—the results of the Fund you inaugurated and your own personal work and labour, it seems to me little short of marvellous. As first Bishop of the see, which, geographically, had been a sort of no man's land, your work was exceptional, and when you are gone all will know and agree that the value of your work is inestimable. The impress of the first Bishop of Newcastle will last for all time in the county of Northumberland.¹

One more letter may be quoted as presenting the aspect in which the Bishop was, perhaps, most desirous of being remembered.

¹ Perhaps I may here quote the homely phrase of Archdeacon Basil Wilberforce in regard to the Newcastle diocese, 'You have polished that boot.'

Under some circumstances such a message (of deep regret and good wishes) from an obscure individual like myself ¹ would be unnecessary, not to say presumptuous, but I feel most strongly that those who appreciate your work in this diocese ought not to let slip their last opportunity of telling you how you have won their affection and how they have recognised in you a pastor rather than an official, or as it has been happily phrased 'a Father-in-God and not a Father-in-law.' A Bishop whose work lay more in the public gaze would probably have had more encouragement from popular applause, but he could not have gained that deep-seated affection which has been kindled by the personal and paternal character of your episcopate. It is very difficult for me to express myself without using language which might suggest the idea of a private soldier patting his colonel on the back, but perhaps I may be allowed to say to the Bishop of Chichester what I could not have said without impropriety to the Bishop of Newcastle.

Ernest Wilberforce had never allowed his official duties as head of a diocese to interfere with his pastoral office, and in the midst of all his work and correspondence he had found time to labour as a priest among his neighbours in Newcastle and elsewhere. The two following letters, whose respective authors stood at the extreme social poles, show him in a light which will seem unfamiliar to the severer critics of Episcopacy.

I have often wished (wrote one of the hardest-headed men of affairs in the north, the manager of perhaps the most famous of the great Tyneside industries) although I have never had the courage to thank you for the prayer at my bedside long ago. The words have passed from my mind; but the spirit and the kind, more than kind, Christian thought will never pass from my heart;

¹ The Rev. Kenneth Davis.

every time I am on a sickbed it comes back to me, and the remembrance bears the fruit I know you would wish. God bless you for it, and may He give you all the prosperity and happiness I sincerely wish you all.

No less touching is the second, dated from a small street in one of the most thickly populated districts in the city of Newcastle.

DEAR SIR,—May I just, in my own way, say how I for one regret your leaving us for to enter another see. I am truly sorry that you are going away, but God's will not ours be done, and may the short stay you have had amongst us be a blessing to many in after years. I have not forgotten the kind words you spoke to the Candidates of the Confirmation in St. Cuthbert's Church 2 years ago. I have kept them in mind ever since for they have been a great benefit to me. And now let me thank you for what you did for me when I was in the greatest of trouble with a sick Husband. I shall always think kindly of you for it and I pray you may never have to go through anything like what I passed. Had it not been for the help you gave me I might have been lost for I was nearly about to give way to a careless life. So now I must wish you a very warm and affectionate good-bye, and also to Mrs. Wilberforce, and may you both have a very hearty reception in your new home is the earnest prayer of —.

Letters from Presbyterian and Congregationalist ministers, who had been made free of the hospitality of Benwell Tower, assured him in warm terms that in other communions besides his own Church he had made many and true friends. The Editor of the *Newcastle Chronicle* wrote to assure Mrs. Wilberforce that 'throughout his entire sojourn in the north her husband had presented a noble example of unwearied zeal and unselfish devotion to the Master's work.' Prominent laymen in the

county, Sir Andrew Noble, Colonel Dyer of the Elswick works, Lord Armstrong, Sir Matthew White Ridley, Sir George Trevelyan, Dr. Thomas Hodgkin, Sir Benjamin Browne, the Duke of Northumberland, men of widely divergent schools of thought alike in religion and politics, paid homage, each in his own style, to what one of them termed 'the strong and loving head that has nurtured and guided the diocese during the years of its infancy and early childhood.'

Earl Percy¹ paid a compliment which must have been peculiarly grateful to the grandson of William Wilberforce, 'you have completely mastered the peculiarities of us northerners.' Earl Grey² referred to the 'episcopal tobacco and good company' he had enjoyed in the smoking-room at Benwell. Nor were the expressions of regret less warm among his fellow Bishops in the northern province, amongst whom he had gradually established for himself a position that was all his own. 'The northern Convocation was like a chill cellar when first I went and found you away,' wrote one of them³ some few years later. 'I am afraid your absence made me cross and unjust . . . and everybody looked uninteresting. It was the hearty human feeling that I missed, and its loss made everything feel stilted and unreal.' Wilberforce had first taken his seat among the Bishops in Convocation with something of the air of a schoolboy just promoted to the sixth form, looking up to the ripe wisdom and experience of men like Harvey Goodwin and Lightfoot and Fraser as something almost beyond the compass of his attainment. He spoke seldom, because, as he said naively of himself,

¹ The present Duke of Northumberland.

² The present peer.

³ Bishop Moorhouse of Manchester.

in the southern province, he was afraid of being only a bore. But he brought into the Council Chamber an independence of judgment and a freshness of expression the value of which was speedily recognised. When he went south there were few members of either House whose views commanded more attention and respect. Under the masterful rule of Archbishop Thomson the Convocation of York was ruffled by breezes which occasionally attained the proportions of a gale, but Ernest Wilberforce succeeded in retaining the confidence and warm regard of his Metropolitan without forfeiting the affection of those who from time to time were brought into collision with that imperious spirit. The Archbishop had been for a short period curate of Cuddesdon, and he had never forgotten the little curly-haired boy who used to waylay him outside the study door at the Palace to be swung on to his powerful shoulders.

The translation was to take actual effect in the beginning of February 1896, and the clergy and laity of the diocese were determined to mark the occasion by a gift which should be at once personal to the Bishop himself and a permanent testimonial to his memory in the diocese. The sum of £1250 was raised in the course of the few weeks that remained. Out of this the Bishop accepted £100 to be expended on some article of furniture for the study in his new home ; and at his own suggestion the residue was placed at his disposal to be devoted to such diocesan object as he might select : in accordance with his wishes it was invested in the names of a body of trustees, for the distribution of the annual interest among the poorer and the sick clergy of the diocese. Throughout his Episcopate Ernest Wilberforce had not only been most generous in his private assistance to those cases of

clerical poverty which are still the shame and reproach of the National Church, but he had acted as almoner in the distribution of funds with which he was entrusted from time to time by those who learnt through him sad stories of privation and distress. Letters which are now before me attest the tact and consideration with which he was accustomed to discharge a delicate and sometimes a painful duty.

The presentation, which was made by the present Duke of Northumberland, was accompanied by the gift of a diamond necklace to Mrs. Wilberforce, subscribed for by the ladies of the diocese as a mark of friendship and affection and as a recognition of the zeal and devotion with which in her own sphere of woman's work she had laboured by her husband's side. In expressing her thanks Mrs. Wilberforce made a strong appeal for continued support to those causes with which she had especially identified herself, the Diocesan Home of Mercy and the Home at Cullercoats for Waifs and Strays.

They are (she said) and always will be very near our hearts, and the Bishop and I are already looking forward to being present, if you will let us, at the opening of the new building; you will not, I am persuaded, allow these Homes to languish for want of funds, and in addition I would venture to plead very earnestly for your sympathy that can find expression in so many different ways towards those who are working in these Homes with a daily self-denial which is heroic, and which we are too apt to accept as a matter of course from those who are placed in such positions of anxious responsibility.

Once more (continued the speaker), in thanking you for this beautiful gift, may I express my gratitude for the unvarying kindness you have always shown to me and mine? We have made friends in these years

that will be ours through time into Eternity ; and wherever we are—be it in Northumberland or Sussex,

‘Behind the dim unknown
Standeth God, within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own.’

The final leave-taking was in the cathedral on the afternoon of January 23. In no other place could the word of last farewell be so appropriately uttered, and though in form they were addressed to the clergy gathered together from every corner of the diocese—to his ‘Brethren beloved in the Lord’—the message was one that went home to all who had laboured with him in the cause of Christ for fourteen strenuous years. The Bishop chose the text from 2 Thessalonians iii., 5 : *‘And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.’*

Of the work accomplished by the diocese during this period (he said towards the close of this, his last sermon as Bishop of Newcastle) it is not for me to speak. God has done it, and He has used you and your brethren of the laity as His willing instruments. We have worked together, clergy and laity, bringing to the task our differing opinions, our keen criticisms, each his own personality. But we have worked in love and ever with the strong purpose that, so far as we were able, the work should go through, because it was the Master’s work. Hence our work has been harmonious, and it has been blessed. New churches, mission chapels, rooms, and halls have sprung up. Souls have been won, instructed, fed ; spiritual life has deepened in many a heart. Into the highways and hedges the Church has gone, and has not returned with empty hands. For how much of this have we not to thank the laity, Churchmen and Churchwomen of this diocese—nay, not only Church people. I, you, the diocese, owe many a deep debt of gratitude to many who, calling

themselves by different names and dissenting from much that we hold dear are yet really attached to the old Church of this land, are generous not only in their estimate of her place and work, but are ready to give the most substantial proofs of their generosity.

But while we think with gratitude of the blessings of the past, calls loud and forcible come to us from the ever-growing population, from masses untouched, from work begun and not yet carried to completion. District churches, built, and some not yet finished, slenderly endowed, or not, as yet, endowed at all, with populations increased already enormously since the work was undertaken, these must be a source of some anxiety. St. Aidan's, St. Augustine's and St. Jude's, Newcastle, are especial instances of my meaning. Would to God that these could be both completed and so endowed that the heavy load of debt could be removed, and the incumbents set above the harassing care of financial difficulty, free for purely spiritual works. . . . But I will particularise no longer : around us in seething mass are sin and misery, pain and sorrow ; the Church of God has a message of alleviation, rescue, healing. The Incarnation of our Lord has power on earth to-day as it had eighteen hundred years ago. Godliness has the ' promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' No royal road to instant remedy for all wrongs, but a gradual up-lifting, cleansing, sanctifying for the whole body of the people ; redemption, renewal, pardon, peace and present joy for all who will accept the Lord who comes with healing in His wings. . . .

I thank you, more warmly than I can trust myself to express, for the personal kindness you have shown me as your Bishop : for the loving confidence, the genuine sympathy, the generous consideration, you as a body have ever been ready to give me. It has upheld me in many a difficult time, has strengthened me always, has comforted me often. I have striven to be amongst you as a Father-in-God, to know, share, and help in your labours and difficulties, to be, if a *primus*, yet a *primus inter pares*, and you have responded nobly.

I thank you for the dying down of anything like rancorous party spirit, if any existed. Your love for a common Master has killed it, if ever it tried to grow. You have acknowledged that men cannot be of one mind in all things ; that not always the same side of a truth will commend itself to every mind, that few can see all sides of all truth at once in perspective, that the Church of England is not narrow, but wide, and tolerant, and loving, and has ample room within her fold for all whose teaching and belief is loyally contained within the four corners of her Prayer Book.

Party spirit divides, embitters, hinders, spoils the soul of the individual and disfigures the Bride of Christ. You have seen that the love of God and the patience of Christ will unite and strengthen. You have worked together, and with me. Yes, the march of the Temple Guards must be orderly. No wonder those men of old, whose tale is told in the Book of Chronicles, succeeded in their task of making David king ; their qualifications marked them from the first as conquerors. They were ‘ men of war ’ that ‘ could keep rank,’ and they ‘ came with a perfect heart.’ What power could resist them ? My brothers in the Church of God, (and these words go beyond the clergy to the laity as well,) you are called to a Holy War, to enthrone the Saviour in the hearts of men, to a struggle, deadly, continuous, real, not alone against flesh and blood fallen humanity, but against the very Prince of Evil and his dark, threatening hosts. Beneath all outward hindrances recognise your enemy, nor dare to cease from your labours till God Himself shall give you your discharge.

From this central house of worship in the diocese may men go forth who have come here themselves to be kindled with a coal from the altar of God, and who carry the radiance out into the dark places where devils haunt and temptation is triumphant. Do you remember what one whose lips are dust and whose soul is in the keeping of its Maker said as he stood here to preach in November 1887 ? He spoke of the ancient spiritual glories of Northumberland, and added ‘ Of these splendid

traditions, of this bright example, of these Evangelistic triumphs you are the heirs. This diocese still enshrines the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, the true cradle of English Christianity. . . . While all else changes the spirit is unchanged. The simplicity, self-devotion, prayerfulness, the burning love of Christ which shone forth in those Celtic Missionaries of old, must be your spiritual equipment now. Then when your work is done and another generation shall have taken your place, it may be that some future Bede will again trace, in words of tender and regretful sympathy, the undying record of a Christ-like life and work.'

And now the last words must be spoken. God be with you. Goodbye, brethren, pray for us ; the Communion of Saints is real, we can help each other daily, and often join in closest fellowship before the Altar of God. Pray for hearts of fire ; pray for the conversion of those in sin or error ; pray that you yourselves may be wholly God's ; pray Him to look down and visit the Vine which He has planted.

Many things are left unsaid ; this prayer I would leave with you : 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.' And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those were the parting words from the pulpit of St. Nicholas, and within a week Ernest Wilberforce was enthroned in Chichester Cathedral as Bishop of his new diocese.

CHAPTER X

BISHOP OF CHICHESTER—1896–1907

The See of Chichester—Peculiarities of the diocese—The Bishop's sermon at his enthronisation—The Chapter—Easter offerings fund—Appreciation of the Bishop by one of the Sussex clergy—Life at the Palace—His devotion to his home—His reserved nature—Happy relations with the clergy—The family doctor.

THE removal from Newcastle to Chichester, from the extreme north of England to the extreme south, was almost dramatic in its completeness. It would be waste of time to labour the contrast between the two counties, or between the old diocese and the new, above all, between the great industrial centre on the Tyne which gave its title to the Northumbrian see and the placid Sussex city in which Bishop Wilberforce's lot was now cast. But, as lovers of coincidence were not slow to point out, there was historical precedent for the exchange. In the year 681, when Wilfrid, the patronal saint of Ripon, had been driven from the Bishopric of York, and had been refused shelter by the Kings of Mercia and Wessex, he found a refuge in what was then the heathen land of Sussex. How, by his skill as a fisherman, he saved a barbarous people from famine, how he preached and baptised, how he won over the King, and brought the South Saxons into the fold of Christ, is one of the most

fascinating episodes in the story of the English Church.¹ And finally it was as ruler of the see of Hexham, then the 'stool' of the Northumbrian Bishop, that he found rest after his long and troubled pilgrimage.

From the coming of Wilfrid down to the date of the Norman Conquest the Sussex bishopric was fixed at Selsey, where the encroaching waters of the Channel have long since obliterated all traces of the cathedral and of the episcopal residence. In 1075, by decree of a Synod at which Archbishop Lanfranc presided, the see was removed to Chichester; the Saxon Stigand was the first Diocesan and Wilberforce his 71st successor.² Chichester had never been richly endowed, indeed it had benefited by the Parliamentary Settlement of 1841; nor had it ever been regarded as one of the prizes of the Church. Archbishop Kemp had held it for a short while, and the ill-fated Reginald Pecock had gone from Chichester Palace to meet at Lambeth his sentence of deprivation and perpetual imprisonment. The most famous name on its roll of Bishops is that of Lancelot Andrewes. The first prelate of the modern school was Dr. William Otter, consecrated in 1836. It was during his episcopate that the ancient office of Rural Dean was revived, and that the Theological College and the Diocesan Association were founded; the Otter Memorial College for the training of elementary school mistresses still preserves his name. From 1842 to 1870 the diocese was governed by Dr. Gilbert, a worthy Bishop who followed the Georgian rather than the Victorian tradition. He was succeeded by Dr. Durnford, who was actually older at the date of his consecration than Ernest Wilberforce at the time of his death, but who united great physical vigour to the highest intellectual

¹ See Mr. Rudyard Kipling, *Rewards and Fairies*, p. 217.

² There had been twenty-one Bishops of Selsey.



Photo by Marsh & Son, Chichester.

THE PALACE, CHICHESTER.

attainments. The twenty-five years during which he held sway witnessed a steady revival in Church life, and careful organisation of the various institutions and societies which had become essential to a diocese under modern conditions. His singular charm of manner and his lovable disposition had endeared him to laity and clergy alike, and had made him a very difficult person to follow.

Indeed the task before the new Bishop was very different from that which he had been compelled to face at Newcastle. The occasion required no missionary or pioneer. He had to maintain a high existing standard and to adapt it to a restless and rapidly moving age. But there lay awaiting him a crop of troublesome questions which had been accumulating during his predecessor's long administration. Chichester is in the main a rural diocese comprising much of the loveliest and least spoiled country in England; but it also contains within its borders some of the most popular and populous of the southern watering places. There is something both at Brighton and Hastings which seems to foster the growth of extreme views and practices on either side of the line. And the following chapters will show what heavy demands were made upon the tact and patience of the Bishop of Chichester by the clash of conflicting sentiment, and the bitterness which seems inseparable from theological controversy.

From the geographical point of view it might be supposed that the diocese of Chichester was easy of administration.

But (says the biographer of Bishop Durnford¹) the statement requires qualification. The diocese,

¹ The Very Rev. W. R. W. Stephens, late Dean of Winchester. See *A Memoir of Bishop Durnford*, p. 112,

which is almost exactly co-extensive with the county of Sussex, is nearly eighty miles in length, and the ancient city of Chichester, where the Bishop's dwelling is situated, stands at one extremity of it. In ancient days the roads of Sussex were proverbially bad, carriages were often overturned or stuck fast in the mire, and even in the present century¹ a clergyman instituted to a Down parish in September was recommended by the Bishop to 'settle' in 'without delay before the autumn rains rendered the roads impassable. Those days are long past, but even now the high backbone of hills which runs through the whole length of the county from east to west forms a hindrance to rapid communication between the northern and southern divisions, while the railway service is one of the slowest and most unpunctual in England.² Some of the villages in the seclusion of the hills are not easy of access, and the Bishop found that many country parishes were of inconvenient size and shape, being either very long and narrow or very wide and rambling.

To Ernest Wilberforce, still, despite his recent illness, in the vigour of manhood, these lonely country parishes, accessible by long walks and longer bicycle rides, were no stumbling-block, and though Chichester might be at an inconvenient distance for a clergyman bent on a personal interview with his Diocesan, its very remoteness led to the invitation 'to dine and sleep and talk it over' which forms the constant burden of the Bishop's correspondence. The whole country-side was full of happy associations, for Lavington itself was within the borders of the diocese, and the Isle of Wight, the early home of Mrs. Wilberforce, was in easy reach.

¹ Written in 1899.

² In a letter written from South Africa in 1904 the Bishop compared the railway between Mafeking and Bulawayo with the South Coast lines, by no means to the advantage of the latter.

It was a return to old friends and old memories, to rolling downs and far-flung seaboard, and to a climate which has few rivals in these islands.

The enthronement took place on Tuesday, January 28. The service in the cathedral was preceded by the presentation of an address of welcome from the Mayor and citizens in the Council Chamber, and it was an illustration of the length of Bishop Durnford's episcopate that not a single member of the corporation who had greeted him in May 1870 was present to do honour to his successor.¹ At 11 o'clock the venerable cathedral was crowded with a congregation drawn from all parts of the diocese. The Mayors of seven boroughs² besides the cathedral city were present. The cathedral body was there in full strength, with the Dean and Canons Residentiary at its head, and there was a large muster of the parochial clergy. The Bishop was accompanied by his brother Basil, now Archdeacon of Westminster, and the Vicar of Newcastle, the Rev. Edward John Gough, who acted as his chaplains. The simple and impressive ceremony was performed with the ancient rites revived by Archbishop Benson. Then, after the familiar anthem, 'How lovely are the Messengers,' the Bishop left his throne and passed down the choir as if making for the nave. But at the head of the choir steps he paused, and, standing beneath the screen with the Dean on his left and the Archdeacons on his right, he preached his first sermon as Bishop of Chichester. The text was chosen from the first verse of his favourite Psalm,³ '*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help,*' and from the first

¹ The solitary survivor had ceased for some years to be a member of the Council.

² Arundel, Brighton, Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rye, and Worthing.

³ The 121st.

sentence, uttered in a voice so clear and penetrating as to reach the remotest corners of the building, he held his listeners in that deep hush which tells of absorbed attention. To all who heard him came the conviction that in their new Diocesan they had not merely a preacher of uncommon oratorical gifts, but a leader of men endowed with intense earnestness and a deeply spiritual nature.

To-day (he said) from every detail of this stately service there call to me the words 'Feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.' While from the shores of the quiet lake there comes the great commission sounding through all intervening ages, 'Feed My lambs, shepherd My sheep, feed My sheep, tend the young, restore the wandering, feed those within the fold.' And if I feel how insufficient I am for the task, and inquire from those who have preceded me the secret of their power, as, called unto their rest, they now throng up the steep slopes of light, each turns towards me with the same words upon his lips, 'Out of weakness were made strong'; each, with faithful finger, points to the motto of his life, 'I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, whence cometh my help.' To the hills where the first faint rays of the coming dawn are seen; where echoes haunt and linger, caught from higher heights beyond, where air is pure and free and strong; to the hills lifted above the swamps and the miasma, above the low-lying lands of doubt and uncertainty, above the babble and the questioning, above 'the world's loud stunning tide,' up where they rear themselves towards the gathering of the solemn stars, where the night winds whisper, and the beat of angel wings is heard, where man can commune with his God, whence cometh help. To the hills, where the showers gather big with blessing, and fall drop by drop till the rills begin to sparkle and leap, and the tiny rivulets are swelling into the broadening river, refreshing hamlet and homestead, falling down into the plain and cleansing

every city, sweeping onward with its gathering burden to the mighty sea, the broad fertilising stream of the life of the Church of God. May God enable us to fix our eyes upwards ever, and dwell upon the hope that lives in these words transmuted into assurance by the lips of Jesus Christ our Lord.¹

The best cordial for drooping spirits—wrote one not long ago, now in the Paradise of God—is the study of history. Look at the transforming power of God in one individual heart and tell me why that power should not change all hearts. Look how the weak become strong, the hardened gentle, the rough and unloving like unto a little child; how lives steeped deep in sin are washed and changed; how the eye long fixed upon the mire and filth becomes uplifted, and now seeks the city which hath foundations; how men who once knew not Christ now kneel and pray to God Whom they have never seen, Whose voice they have never articulately heard, but on whom the love of God is doing its work, till leaving all that bound them formerly they rise up and seek to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Men tell you the age of miracles is past; but where can you find a work of wonder greater in all that glorious record of the Saviour's work, when to and fro His sacred feet were going, treading the hills and valleys of Galilee and Judæa, than is seen now in the renovated heart and the sanctified life, in the soul where the word of peace has fallen, in the strength that renders the weakest the strongest of the strong. Daily we have need to pray 'Lord, increase our faith!' But, working on in faith, lo! mountains fall, valleys are filled up, rough places become smooth, and the wilderness is seen to blossom as the rose. There is no weakness

¹ Mountain, sea, and river were the source of the imagery to be found most frequently in the Bishop's sermons. They were the natural objects to which in his life he was ever most passionately attached. The words of Gounod's anthem, sung at his funeral, 'Send out Thy Light and Thy Truth that they may lead me,' must have brought to the hearers almost the tones of the Bishop's voice.

so profound, no sin so great, that the life of the Son of God cannot strengthen or annul it. Great is the mystery, yet by authorised contact with the healing presence of Christ continued in his Church and in His Sacraments, with faithful prayer, and reverent practice, we become members of ' His body, His flesh, His bones ' ; so teaches God the Holy Ghost. High and holy, if awful, is our responsibility, See that we fulfil it. Noble is the privilege. Endeavour in the strength of God to live up to it. Deep is the well ; living are the waters ; abundant and within reach of all are the means of communication. Let us see that we are daily learning, and teaching others, more of Jesus Christ our Lord, in Whom alone is life, life that is the very light of men, as we strive to lift our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help.

The brief address was ended, and the Bishop retraced his steps up the choir to the Altar to give the Benediction, and as he raised his hand, his tall figure standing out against the mass of white flowers with which the Holy Table had been dressed by loving fingers, a burst of brilliant sunshine flooded the cathedral, and cast a happy augury on the work to which the remainder of his life on earth was dedicated.

A civic luncheon followed at which the Bishop was the guest of the Mayor of Chichester. A pleasant incident in it was the receipt of a telegram of congratulation and good wishes from the Congregational ministers and delegates then assembled at Brighton in their County Association Meeting. The Mayor, it should be added, was himself a Nonconformist, and in his speech pleaded earnestly for the continuance of the kindly relations between Church and Dissent which had become traditional in Chichester. The day closed with a great evening party at the Deanery, where the Bishop and Mrs. Wilberforce were being entertained as guests.

The Dean of Chichester, the Very Rev. R. W. Randall, was one of the oldest surviving friends of the Wilberforce family. Regarded in his time as one of the advanced wing of the High Church party, the great work of his life had been accomplished at All Saints, Clifton; but for seventeen years he had been Rector of Lavington, and he had known Ernest as a schoolboy, an undergraduate, and a newly ordained priest. The strongest mutual affection had grown up between them. Randall was one of the two or three men to whom the new Bishop had been accustomed to turn for counsel. Their positions were now inverted, but the Bishop, always conspicuously happy in his relations with those much older than himself, never ceased to treat the Dean with a filial tenderness. Nor was Wilberforce less fortunate in his Archdeacons, the Venerable F. J. Mount and the Venerable Robert Sutton, both of whom rendered him loyal and invaluable service. Archdeacon Mount resigned in 1903,¹ and was succeeded by the Venerable E. L. Elwes. Archdeacon Sutton, who had been appointed a prebendary as far back as the days of his father-in-law, Bishop Gilbert, was destined to survive into the reign of the present Bishop: he resigned in 1908 and died in 1910.

One of the first matters taken in hand by the Bishop was that of Easter offerings on behalf of the incumbents and their curates. In 1893 a resolution had been carried at the Hastings Diocesan Conference commending this practice as the most obvious means of giving the laity an opportunity of contributing to the support of the clergy. The congregations at the seaside resorts along the coast, at Bognor, Littlehampton, Worthing, Brighton, Eastbourne, Bexhill, St. Leonards, and Hastings had liberally responded, and at the Diocesan

¹ He died in the same year.

Conference held at Brighton in October 1896 a Committee was able to report that Easter offerings had been instituted in one church out of three throughout the diocese. But in the country districts only a beginning had been made, and there the rapid fall in the value of tithe-rentcharge was rendering the need of some supplement to clerical incomes even greater than in the urban districts. To this task Bishop Wilberforce set himself from the first months of his entry into his new diocese. He had started the custom at Newcastle, and now in the south he made it his aim to systematise it, and to introduce it into every one of those Sussex churches, exceeding two hundred in number, where as yet it was unknown. It was obviously undesirable for the incumbent to ask on his own behalf that the offerings on Easter Day should be appropriated to his own use. This could best be done by an authority external to the parish, and the most appropriate authority was the Bishop. Accordingly in Lent 1897 he addressed the following letter to the churchwardens throughout the diocese:—

GENTLEMEN,—Will you allow me to bring before your notice the subject of ‘Easter Offerings’ for the Parochial Clergy, and ask you to be so kind as to take the matter in hand in parishes where those offerings have not yet been so given, and to continue them in parishes where they have already been commenced. This was the ancient and constitutional method whereby parishioners used in olden days to assist the clergy; and never was help more urgently needed for the great body of the clergy than in the present. Official incomes are not large in this diocese, and, as you are well aware, even these incomes are now much below their ancient value owing to the fall in tithe. I am aware that many of the laity are suffering from similar causes; still I

believe that the generosity of English people will lead them to value this method of rewarding diligent service. May I then ask you, as the clergy cannot themselves come forward in this matter, to see that the offerings on Easter Day are devoted to the personal use of the clergy, and that due notice of this is given beforehand to the parishioners.

A similar notice was issued year by year with successful and encouraging results, and the sum collected, which in 1896 amounted to £5478, had risen by Easter 1907 to £9100. Experience proved that among all classes, the poor as well as the rich, the duty, when properly explained, became a pleasure, and that Churchmen welcomed the opportunity of making some acknowledgment for the labour of those who toiled so unselfishly in their midst. Nor was it only in the way of Easter offerings that the Bishop strove to improve the financial position of his clergy. The Chichester Diocesan Association, established by his predecessor, was warmly supported by him, and was the medium for maintaining curates in parishes where otherwise the full burden would have been thrown on the incumbent. During the latter years of Bishop Durnford a 'Bishop of Chichester's Fund' had been founded on the lines of that which Wilberforce had himself inaugurated in Newcastle, a portion of which was applied in aid of parochial endowments. It was continued for some time after his translation, but it had been called into existence to meet an emergency, and though the rapidity with which the population increased throughout the country rendered that emergency permanent, it was found more practicable to appeal for money through other agencies, of which the Diocesan Clergy Fund was one of the most useful.

One incident connected with the Easter offerings was the source of no small chagrin to the Bishop. The relief afforded by them did not escape the eagle eyes of the surveyor of taxes, and a demand was made for income tax on the money so collected.

A test case¹ was taken to the courts, and on December 11, 1906, an order was made by Mr. Justice Bray in the King's Bench Division declaring that the assessment of Easter offerings to income tax was illegal. This, however, was reversed on July 3 in the following year by the Court of Appeal, presided over by that staunch Churchman Lord Chief Justice Alverstone; the case was carried to the House of Lords, who (December 10, 1908) were unanimous in upholding the judgment pronounced in the Court of Appeal. And so for all time, or until the legislature intervene, Easter offerings will remain assessable.²

¹ *Cooper v. Blakiston*. The Rev. D. Y. Blakiston was the Vicar of St. Swithin's, East Grinstead. The case is reported in *Law Reports*, 1909, A.C. 104.

² The judgment of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Loreburn, in which Lord Ashbourne, Lord Robertson, and Lord Collins concurred, is a concise statement of the law, from which it would take a bold man to differ.

'The only question is whether or not a sum given by parishioners and others to the Vicar at Easter, 1905, is assessable to income tax as being "profits accruing" to him "by reason of such office." In my opinion, where a sum of money is given to an incumbent substantially in respect of his service as incumbent, it accrues to him by reason of his office. Here the sum of money was given in respect of those services. Had it been a gift of an exceptional kind, such as a testimonial or a contribution for a specific purpose, as to provide for a holiday, or a subscription peculiarly due to the personal qualities of the particular clergyman, it might not have been a voluntary payment for services, but a mere present. In this case, however, there was a continuity of annual payments apart from any special occasion or purpose, and the ground of the call for subscriptions was one common to all clergymen with insufficient stipends, urged by the Bishop on behalf of all alike. What you choose to call it matters little. The point is, what was it in reality? It was natural and in no way wrong that all concerned should make this gift appear as like a mere present as they could. But they acted straightforwardly as one would expect, and the real character of what was done appears clearly enough from the papers in which contributions were solicited.'

Among the letters which Ernest Wilberforce had received on his appointment to Newcastle in 1882 was one which implored him 'to take a more sympathetic line about Church difficulties than that adopted by certain members of the Episcopal Bench.' The writer was now his Dean at Chichester, and the recipient had never forgotten the injunction. The 'Church difficulties' particularly referred to had scarcely existed in the north, but he had there shown a practical sympathy with his clergy and an intimate knowledge of their trials which gained him their affection and confidence in no stinted measure. It was said, jocularly, that he knew them all by their backs. The Sussex clergy were not long in discovering that in their new Bishop they had a champion as well as a friend, and the following passage from his first Visitation charge is to my mind one of the noblest vindications of the English priesthood which is to be found in our literature.

Surrounded by grave difficulties, confronted by the whole power of the fallen spiritual kingdom of Satan, often misunderstood and misinterpreted by those for whom they labour, too frequently also pinched by privation, if not actually pressed by poverty borne with a splendid patience that deserves more generous recognition, often overweighted here by the necessities of enormous populations, or there maintaining a higher spiritual life in the midst of an almost appalling isolation, or against the dead-weight of endless monotony; conscious to the full of being themselves but earthen vessels, and subject to daily, hourly temptations the full force of which perhaps scarce anyone realises until he has been some time ordained to the office of the priesthood. Yet they are upborne by the knowledge that they bear a heavenly treasure, are burdened with a divine message, are commissioned to stand between the living and the dead; that the Gospel of

Peace is committed to them, the ministry of reconciliation is theirs. They endeavour 'to speak the truth in love'; they are sustained by the knowledge that they have been called, sent; they are supported by the word of promise, ever ringing in their ears, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world'; they know that they serve a Church whose cause must be victorious in the end, for the Royal Word has gone forth, 'the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.' . . .

The impression created by Ernest Wilberforce on his clergy, an impression which was strengthened as the years rolled on, can best be given in the words of one of them, the Rev. H. M. Hordern,¹ who has kindly furnished me with a brief sketch of his late Diocesan.

The Bishop did not do things by halves. What he did, he did with all his might. His likes and dislikes were strong. He felt strongly, and so he spoke and acted strongly. There were three things for which he evidently had an intense love: the Truth, Nature, Home. And if we were permitted to look for the underlying cause we should probably find it in a perfectly simple belief in the Fatherhood of God as revealed to us by our Lord. The truth was God's truth. The world was God's world. The home was God's home.

His love for the truth was not merely a liking to hear the truth, but a determination to find it and to show it. This made him often a champion of unpopular causes, and a fearless opponent of what was unfair or untrue in any movement however popular. Although he had a keenly sensitive nature he cared very little for public opinion; he disliked intensely party spirit, and used very vigorous language in denouncing party methods. Those who were present at a certain meeting convened to draw together the various Missionary Societies of the Church will not

¹ Rector of St. Nicholas, Brighton.

easily forget the emphasis with which the Bishop in his opening speech denounced the action of certain misguided individuals who were distributing leaflets of a very partisan character at the door. He declared that their efforts were *Satanic*. Many men would have used a milder term, but no word would have been truer, or have better expressed the feeling of all in the room.

But together with this hatred of party spirit went a wide toleration, and a hearty appreciation of all true work done by men of whatever school of thought, and a generosity of mind which led him actively to interfere on behalf of 'extreme men' with whom he did not agree and who had sometimes caused him much anxiety. His evidence before the Royal Commission was proof of this. No clergy had a more loyal champion at that tribunal than had the clergy of Sussex in their Bishop.¹ He did not see why minorities should suffer; nor would he allow party associations or would-be reformers or irresponsible informers to influence his judgment. Such people were given to understand clearly that their interference was not appreciated, and that he knew his own clergy better than they seemed to think. But his regard for the parish priests of his diocese was not chiefly shown in public. Very many could tell of private acts of generosity by the Bishop, relieving them sometimes from pressing anxieties in their parishes or in their homes. It was always as a Father-in-God that he dispensed his charity, sometimes, if need be, with censure, but always with sympathy and a thoughtful interest. The nature of these acts forbade publicity and therefore caused him greater pleasure.

Few men had a greater dislike for outward show. Ceremony necessary to the public functions of his office he endured with dignity, but he had no love for it,²

¹ *Vide infra*, p. 288.

² 'He disliked minutiae of ceremonial,' says another of his clergy, from whom I have already quoted largely. 'He once spoke to me of genuflection. "It is not necessary," he said, "my dear old father was perfectly reverent, but he never genuflected. Dear old Pusey never genuflected."'

and he liked most of all his visits to little country parishes where he could quietly take the place of the parish priest, and preach the gospel and administer the Blessed Sacrament to simple country folk. If in doing this he could give the country parson a holiday he enjoyed his Sunday all the more.

It would not be fitting to speak of the tender associations of his family life, but few men have had a greater love for home and all that makes home dear and sacred. Many men whose lives are lived in public, and whose days are more than fully occupied in outside interests, find, though they would gladly have it otherwise, that home must take a second place. It was not so with Bishop Ernest Wilberforce; his home was everything to him, and he held that the peculiar characteristics of Englishmen sprang from love of home. He loved beyond all things to be with his wife and children, and to get home after work to read to his boys from books of daring and adventure such as all boys love. He remembered other people's homes and children too, and many boys and girls in the county still treasure the Maundy silver pennies received from the Bishop with such delight when they were little children.

Choral Mattins and Evensong in the Palace Chapel with his family and servants seemed to them all, as well as to visitors staying in the house, a natural part of the home life rather than offices of the Church. And the most fitting memorial that has been erected to his memory in Chichester is the memorial in this chapel. It is a reredos with a picture of our Blessed Lord as the Good Shepherd laying his charge on St. Peter, 'Feed My lambs.' This was given by some of his sons and daughters in God whom he had confirmed in the diocese. Sussex people will long treasure the memory of those Confirmations. There was something in those addresses of his which, perhaps more than anything else, has made his Episcopate a blessing to thousands of Sussex boys and girls. The earnestness and manfulness, the sympathy and hopefulness, and above all the devotional spirit with which he spoke so plainly and affectionately, have

been a power for good which, of course, we cannot fully estimate ; but parish priests who had the difficult and responsible work of training candidates for Confirmation will be always grateful to the Bishop for the help he gave their children at the moment when nervousness and wandering thoughts so readily occupy the mind. It was his custom, just before asking for the renewal of the Baptismal Vow, to steady and solemnise their thoughts by giving them a simple prayer to use in silence : ‘ O God, take my heart and make it wholly Thine, for Jesus Christ’s sake.’ And immediately after the laying-on of hands he would whisper to each one, still kneeling before him, ‘ Will you go back to your place, my child, and pray ? ’

To complete the picture I must add another short appreciation from the pen of the Rev. C. W. Wilson,¹ who had known Ernest Wilberforce and his family for over forty years.

You ask me (he writes to Mrs. Wilberforce) to give you any thoughts which the memory of your dear husband’s life brings back into my mind. I only wish I could recall the impressions which that life always made on me, but my many years have made them all too faint now. Only let me say in all truth, no man ever gave me such ideas of simplicity of character, of genuine humility without the least affectation, and the most complete manliness, with the most natural habit of life I ever came across. You could never mistake him ; his horror of anything that was mean or wrong, and his courage in approving and fulfilling all that was right was most noteworthy. Only I suspect he must often and often have allowed things which seemed to him, and which were, contrary to his opinion of what was right to dwell in his mind and to give him greater anxiety than was either requisite or likely to be indulged in by ordinary minds, and this always seemed to me one

¹ For many years Archdeacon of the Isle of Wight ; see p. 185, *supra*.

of the great trials of his public life. . . . I was often struck by the way in which as a Bishop he conducted the services of the Church, his intense interest and feeling in the Office, and his absolute devoutness in any matter which had to do with the things of God and Eternity. Never would he allow the shadow of a smile or of frivolity in the mention of holy things in everyday conversation among those who were associating with him.

The reserve which had been so marked a feature in Ernest Wilberforce's character as a young man was never entirely shaken off. In ordinary social intercourse, especially among strangers, he sometimes gave a suggestion of brusquerie and inattention. He had no great stock of conversational small change, and he was too downright to affect an interest which he could not feel. He could not tolerate humbug and pretence, and he kept severely under lock and key the treasure of sympathy which he lavished on his family and intimates, and on those who came to him in affliction of mind, body or estate. He had a particular dislike of 'fuss,' and met it occasionally with a roughness that was disconcerting. One day, shortly after a nasty tumble on a Channel steamer by which his left shoulder had been rather badly bruised, he found himself the centre of a crowd of clergy who were overpowering him with condolences. 'Fortunately it was only my left arm,' he said, shaking his fist almost fiercely, 'I can still knock my clergy down.'

The high pressure at which he was compelled to work tended to make him impatient of interruption, and almost greedily anxious to economise every scrap of time. A luncheon party, before or after an ecclesiastical function in town or country, would perhaps throw his correspondence into arrears or deprive him of an

opportunity which he had allocated for the preparation of some sermon or address. A few months after his translation to Chichester Bishop Wilkinson gave him a gentle hint on this subject.

It is important not to *seem* in a hurry, however hurried you feel. It is everything to arrange to have a free hour after a Confirmation or service or a meeting. Our very humility makes us fail to realise how much the visit of a Bishop means. It is to many a great event, and a little wasted time is really well spent.

It was sound advice, and not superfluous.

Early training and long experience had taught Ernest Wilberforce the necessity, if he was to use his position to full advantage, of winning the confidence and securing the co-operation of all sorts and conditions of men. The following letter from one of that squirearchy to which he himself belonged by birth and old associations will show the care with which his patronage was exercised, and the frankness with which he consulted his laity. The letter to which it is the answer has not been preserved, but the purport is sufficiently obvious. The writer, as is evident, was on no terms of intimacy with his Diocesan.

MY LORD BISHOP,—We of ——— ought to be very grateful to you, as I assure you I am. I quite agree that it is to be regretted that, as a rule, the relations between the Bishops and the laity are not more confidential, but you must allow me to say that since our first interview I have always felt that you were the Bishop of the laity as well as the clergy (if you will pardon this way of putting it). You have asked me rather a difficult question. Now-a-days it is the fashion to ask for a man of a particular school. I think we should be prepared to welcome a *good* man of any school, but it is a *sine qua non* that he should be a

gentleman and not an old man, as the parish requires keeping together, and the Rector should be able to take the lead. I would suggest a moderate High Churchman for these reasons. There is a great desire to improve the services, and there is a large R.C. monastery in the parish, and the monks are very charitable and not unpopular. Any extreme Evangelical might fall foul of them—and you know how suspicious rural Sussex is of Ritualism. With renewed thanks, I am yours very faithfully, . . .

He was scrupulously careful and emphatically just in the exercise of his patronage. He had a keen scent for a good man whoever he might be and wherever he might be found, but he was determined that useful steady work in the diocese should meet with due recognition. In only a single instance, that of the mother Church of Brighton, did he bestow preferment on any but his own clergy. And when he brought the Rev. B. G. Hoskyns from Truro to fill that most important living on the promotion of the Rev. J. J. Hannah to the Deanery of Chichester in 1902, it was recognised that he had exercised a wise discretion and made an unimpeachable choice. On his arrival at Chichester the members of the Chapter were one and all Oxford men. It seems a small matter, but it had been the cause of no small heartburning; and there was general approval when the Bishop, though an Oxford man like his predecessor, gave three residentiary canonries in succession to clergymen who had graduated at the sister University. The following letter will help to indicate the considerations which guided him in what is one of the most troublesome and exacting of a Bishop's responsibilities.

I have been looking for a man in the diocese who could give up his living and take the Canonry here and

devote himself to city and diocesan work ; but the miserable stipend of £300 per annum and only the right to three months of a house, preclude anyone from taking it on those terms who has no good private income. So now I wish to offer you the Canonry in respect of the work you have done for the diocese, and will, I think, continue to do ; and ask only the ordinary three months' residence here from you. The stipend will, I hope, enable you to keep another curate and so enable you to carry on your good work. And I am sure you will do all you can for the spiritual life of the Cathedral and City whilst you are resident amongst us.

Two short extracts from the Bishop's letter-bag will serve to show the terms on which he stood with his clergy.

My great regret, as you know (wrote one of his 'staff-officers' on migrating to a Hertfordshire parish), is leaving your diocese. I can never tell you all that your sympathy and kindness have been to me, and to my wife. I had no idea that it was possible to be on such delightful terms with one's Diocesan until I came into your diocese.

The other is from one of the 'advanced' clergy, of whom we shall read more in the following chapters, on his return from a short visit to the Palace at Chichester.

I have a very great deal to thank you for. I am thankful not only on my own account but very much more for the sake of the Church that is so dear to us, that the old attitude of the Bishops to their priests is not only changed but turned upside down. The last twelve or fifteen years have done wonders in this respect. Your kindness to me personally this last week will not be easily forgotten.

The dry quality of the Bishop's humour as well as his excellent common-sense was exemplified in an unexpected quarter, the columns of the *Record*. A clerical

correspondent had written in great perturbation to tell the readers of that journal that his family doctor had informed him that 'not a single Bishop on the Bench to-day believes in the miraculous in religion.' Thereupon he had hastened to ask each of the Bishops for confirmation or refutation of the charge, and he enclosed such of the answers as were not marked private. Several of their Lordships had weakly allowed themselves to be 'drawn' by the self-appointed inquisitor into stately and reasoned apologetics, but the Bishop of Chichester, with his strong dislike to newspaper controversy, declined to become a victim.

I should advise you (he answered) at once to change your family doctor. For if this gentleman is capable of putting such pernicious and harmful statements into your head, I tremble to think what unauthorised concoctions he might not introduce into other parts of your astounded body.

CHAPTER XI

BISHOP OF CHICHESTER—1896–1907 (*continued*)

Ritual troubles—The Church Association—The Bishop defines his position at his primary visitation—His attitude towards ritual—and towards confession—General approval by moderate men—Abusive letters—Address at the Tunbridge Wells Conference—The Church and the Prayer Book—The Lambeth Opinions—The Bishop's efforts to obtain obedience to them—His success in all but a few cases—His guarded sanction of Reservation.

THE Bishop was not long in discovering that his new diocese was anything but a bed of roses ; nor had his experience in Newcastle prepared him for the peculiar difficulties against which he had there to contend. His ministerial life had been devoted to a fierce and absorbing campaign against sin and indifference, and in that strife the 'unhappy divisions' among members of the Church of England had hardly made themselves apparent. He was now to be involved in a succession of episodes and controversies over matters of ritual and discipline which caused him the greatest distress and anxiety, and which formed serious obstacles to the faithful discharge of his sacred office.

The storm, whose distant mutterings had long been audible, burst in the summer of 1898. Sir William Harcourt, the last of the great Erastians, wrote a series of trenchant letters to the *Times* describing the growth of 'Ritualism' and denouncing the Bishops for

their inability or reluctance to take active steps against the offenders. Sir William had been one of the main Parliamentary champions of the Public Worship Regulation Act of 1874, and he clung firmly to the belief that a diocese ought to be governed on the same lines as a regiment, and that the Thirty-Nine Articles plus a carefully made selection from the Rubrics were on a par with the Queen's Regulations. But he was the mouthpiece of a numerous and important body of Churchmen, and the extravagances of the extreme High Church party in the diocese of Chichester had provided him with chapter and verse for many of his most damaging charges. At Brighton, at Worthing, and at other of the south coast watering places there were churches in which the law was openly defied and where the clergy did very much what was good in their own eyes. These churches, it should be added, were served by devoted men who enjoyed the confidence and active support of congregations drawn from all classes, and who were doing magnificent work in quarters which no previous organisation had succeeded in reaching.

Very early in his Chichester Episcopate Bishop Wilberforce received an intimation of what was before him. On March 24, 1897, the Brighton branch of the Church Association passed the following resolution :—

That the Parish Magazine of the Church of St. Bartholomew be forwarded to the Bishop of the diocese, and that his Lordship's attention be called to the notices of the services and other matters contained therein, not in accordance with the Book of Common Prayer; and further that his Lordship's attention be directed to the performance of the Passion Play in the Parish of the above-mentioned Church.

The Bishop's reply to the Secretary was curt, uncompromising, and, perhaps, not very judicious.

MY DEAR SIR (it ran),—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter containing a resolution of the Brighton branch of the Church Association, and, while wishing to treat you personally, and the Association to which you belong, with all due courtesy and respect, I am bound to inform you plainly, as it may save us both some trouble in the future, that I cannot admit any party Church Society, in or out of the diocese, to any share in the government of the diocese committed to my care.

From that hour Ernest Wilberforce was on the black list of the Church Association both in Brighton and in its headquarters in London, and he was made the object of personal attacks which elicited strong protests from fair-minded members of the Evangelical party both inside the diocese and without.

DEAR MRS. WILBERFORCE (wrote one of her friends¹), I cannot resist writing to you to tell you that I, with many others of my sex, am shocked at the rudeness of the representatives of the Ladies' League to the Bishop of Chichester. I have been asked a hundred times to join this Association, and was once persuaded to attend a meeting where I heard nothing but railing and disagreeable insinuations. . . . I am not what is technically called 'High Church,' but I cannot help bearing my testimony when I see such impertinent conduct.

The late Duke of Richmond was even more plain-spoken in reference to the language used at a public meeting by a certain well-known Evangelical nobleman.

I cannot help being sorry (he wrote to Mrs. Wilberforce), that the Bishop did not call Lord —— over the coals.

¹ The late Mrs. Dugdale, daughter of Sir Charles Trevelyan.

He richly deserved it. Lord —— had better keep such impertinences for some other diocese and avoid Sussex, where we have a Bishop that we respect, at least I do.

Ernest Wilberforce could not be blind to the existence of practices and doctrines which were illegal, but he was resolved to follow his own methods in dealing with the offences and with the transgressors. It was, in the first place, essential that he should define his own position on the questions which were agitating clergy and laity alike, and the opportunity came in his primary visitation, held in July 1898, and prior, it may be noted, to the appearance of Sir William Harcourt's letters in the *Times*. Nothing in the circumstances of his former diocese had rendered it necessary for him to make any such elaborate profession of faith or declaration of policy; and his clear and comprehensive survey of the disputed field, his bold and authoritative exposition of the line he himself intended to follow, were a surprise to those who had hitherto regarded him chiefly, if not entirely, as an organiser and a preacher. The following extracts will serve to explain the standpoint from which he was prepared to meet the extremely difficult cases which already were taxing his powers of conciliation and management.

It cannot be denied that out of the smoke and din of past controversies the fuller recognition of the law of the Church has emerged; that men who have in their day been denounced, or have been treated with bitter scorn and contumely, have, on lengthened examination of the case in the judicial atmosphere of law courts, been proved to be mainly in the right; that in the ranks of the English clergy 'village Hampdens' have been found. Almost every ritual prosecution has issued finally in the vindication of some large liberty. Historical research has established the great inheritance

of the Church. Imprisonments have opened doors which can never again be shut. Things not so very long ago considered unlawful have, on due investigation, proved to be well within the law of the Church. But it is now time to remember that license is the exact opposite of liberty. It does not follow that, because the Church possesses a great inheritance, therefore all things allowed elsewhere are included within the terms of that inheritance. Nor is it reasonable nor even within the bounds of charity, that ritual or observances, even if in themselves lawful, should be everywhere forced upon congregations uninstructed in their use, or even unwilling to accept them. 'Ritual' is useful just so far as it inspires or expresses the devotion of worshippers. In itself it is nothing. It may be so used as to hinder or confuse, rather than inspire or express. Personally what is usually called 'Ritual,' apart from the reverent, orderly and stately ceremonial of the Church, has never been any help to me. But I recognise that others are differently constituted or have been otherwise taught, and find much assistance from that which in no way appeals to myself. Still it appears to me that in parishes where there is only one Church it is a great hardship, if not a lack of charity amounting to cruelty, to introduce what is usually termed 'Ritual' until people are ready to welcome and be helped by it. And it cannot be wondered at, if many who from their earliest youth have grown up amidst very simple yet reverent expressions of ritual are apt to think that much even lawful ritual has its origin from an alien source; that some incline to the Protestant, others to the Catholic expression of the Church's teaching; while in some few cases unauthorised practices have been introduced which find no sanction in the spirit, mind, or teaching of the Church. . . .

I appeal to all, to those erring by defect as well as to those erring by excess, and I cannot believe that the appeal will be made in vain; submit yourselves to the directions plainly set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. Let there be no services used in our Churches

except those contained in the Prayer Book, unless it be by lawful authority. Let studious care be taken that no doctrine is taught but that which is plainly and unmistakably prescribed by the English Church and is according to her mind. Let there be no unauthorised additions to or omissions from the Services prescribed for Sundays and Holy-days. The Laity have a right to know that the Services they find in the Prayer Book will be the Services performed on those stated occasions. On week days let there be due performance of the Daily Services altered only as prescribed in the Shortened Services Act. Let no Special Services be added to or substituted for the prescribed service. Let Authorised Special Services be held at other hours with due notice. But I must request that all such Services, either in use now, or intended to be used hereafter, be submitted to me for authorisation, or, if need be, alteration ; and this request I make to the whole diocese. Do not even appear to exaggerate one Service, or part of a Service, so as to lessen the importance of any other Service. Try to understand and render her Services as expressed by the Church herself in her formularies, rather than as expounded by any particular Society existing for certain purposes within the Church ; avoid party spirit as always harmful and often as destructive of spiritual life. Exclude from your speech, or your printing, party phrases, shibboleths, words which even if true in themselves are almost certain to mislead or irritate others. The word ' Mass ' for the Holy Eucharist is at once the stupidest and most unmeaning of all terms that can be used for that blessed rite, and is certain to raise thoughts in the minds of others which are foreign to your meaning. The New Testament gives grand and glorious names, let these be used. So to speak of the ' Holy Sacrifice ' is again to convey to ordinary minds a meaning which I am sure you do not intend. . . . I fear lest the zeal of some outrunning discretion, or irritation given way to at the denial of just privileges or rights, may endanger at least a part of the inheritance of the Church, or tend to put back indefinitely the use,

understanding, and enjoyment of that inheritance on the part of a large proportion of our people. A large patience has never yet been known to fail of its end, if that end be right and true. Treat every opponent as one who may one day stand at your side as your friend. Submit yourselves to the authority prescribed by the Church whose servant you are, and whose truths you desire to teach. Remember that Charity wins, Controversy divides, Autocracy fosters rebellion. *Odium theologicum* is a heavy weight to carry, it is a terrible disturber of the just balance. It is not because we are certain that we are therefore always right. Full many a battle in the field of religion is mainly won in the closet upon the knees, and the greatest of all human victories is that over self. . . .

And of auricular confession—the word of course means ‘in the ear’ or ‘private.’ Does the Church of England prescribe or allow this, and, if so, does she plainly state this in her offices, and point out with limits the method of its use? She does both. Private or auricular confession is allowed under certain conditions, is advised under others, but is to be enforced as a necessity upon no one. In the first of the two exhortations ordered to be read after the sermon, when ‘warning is given for the celebration of the Holy Communion’ (an exhortation so seldom read now in public, that there is little wonder if to the public it be increasingly unknown), after pointing out the means to be used by the individual for making his peace with God, the Church prescribes, *‘and because it is requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a full trust in God’s mercy and with a quiet conscience; therefore if there be any of you who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience herein but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God’s word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God’s Holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.’*

While in the Office for the Visitation of the Sick it is prescribed, '*Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession, the Priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) after this sort.*' Now clearly here, in the first instance, the impulse is to come from the person who, after all other prescribed means tried, cannot quiet his own conscience. In the second he is to be 'moved' to confess, if his conscience be troubled with any weighty matter, and absolution is to follow the confession, if he humbly and heartily desire it.

This is the sober teaching of the Church: private confession is a special medicine to be used for grave ailments. It is not a necessary condition of spiritual life. Its object is to free the soul from heavy burdens, and so enable a person in life to do without private confession, and to find again his direct access to the Throne of Grace untroubled, and looking once more into the face of God as his Father. Or it is to be used to remove the trouble existing in the conscience of the sick or dying, that he may confidently commit his soul to the keeping of God. And it is to some 'discreet and learned' Minister of God's word that we are invited to come, and not to any or every young and inexperienced priest.

Private confession then is not to be taught as a necessity binding upon all. It is not necessary for every post-baptismal sin. It is not to be enforced upon all before Confirmation or the reception of the Holy Communion. It is a medicine, not a food. It is an exception, not a rule. None can forgive sins but God alone. The very moment a sinner is really and truly repentant, and has made his confession to God, and has renounced his sin, that moment he is forgiven, wheresoever or whosoever he may be. The atoning blood of Christ is his assurance. It is the Charter of His forgiveness. No time nor distance can invalidate the efficacy of the atonement, once and once for all made. The 'Go in peace and sin no more' echoes down

throughout the ages: the really repentant sinner is free to begin his life again. His cleansing is effected. But 'power and commandment' are given to the Ministers of God to 'declare and pronounce' to His people, 'being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins.' And it should be carefully borne in mind, that the Absolution in the Service of Holy Communion, and in the Visitation of the Sick, are no whit more powerful, though both are more personal, than the General Absolution in the daily Service: and that without real and hearty repentance in the sinner, which implies amendment of life as well as contrition of heart, all forms are equally impotent.

The Church of England, then, allows the use, under certain definitely prescribed conditions, of private confession to those in health; and orders that a sick person shall be moved to make a special confession if the conscience be troubled with any weighty matter. Its sanction is limited by this allowance; and it should be observed that there is informal as well as formal confession. Often enough a person will confess some great trouble or sin, and seek for the ministry of God's word which supplies the relief sought for, without formal absolution being pronounced. And I would most strongly urge upon all the paramount necessity of exceeding care being taken, lest the liberty of the individual conscience be infringed. Take care, I would say, and that earnestly, lest in any way you debilitate the conscience, or weaken personal religious life, or lessen the responsibility of each man before God for his own life—lest in any way or to any degree we even seem to encourage any to lean on man, rather than on God, and that directly. The strong objections felt by many to confession, although ignorance and prejudice may have their share in these, have in them at least a righteous fear, lest our personal right of direct access to the Throne of Grace for absolution and peace be interfered with.

I repeat then, though compelled to speak somewhat summarily, that private confession is nowhere ordered

by the Church of England as a condition of spiritual life, and is therefore not to be treated as being a necessity for the highest exercise of that life ; but that under prescribed conditions it is allowed for the relief of a conscience, unable after earnest attempt to make its peace with God ; and that the moving of a sick person feeling his conscience troubled with any weighty matter is plainly ordered in the Prayer Book. Habitual confession as a rule of life I should strongly deprecate. Any attempt to teach it as a necessity to all would be met by me with uncompromising hostility.

By moderate men of all complexions, and even by some to whom that description would be scarcely appropriate, the charge was welcomed as a courageous, unambiguous statement. ‘To the extreme men of either party,’ he had said, ‘I must necessarily seem to incline rather to the opposite side. This is inherent to the position of those who follow the *via media* of the Church ; at once Protestant and Catholic, she teaches no extremes.’ His almost passionate appeal to the loyalty of his clergy went home to all who had been cradled in the traditions and ideals of the old historic Church of England. And even his warnings to those who might in the future feel driven to place themselves in opposition to his directions breathed a spirit of charity against which the most determined were not proof. Henceforward the great mass of clergy and laity throughout the diocese were ranged on the side of their Bishop and prepared to accept his rulings. The general feeling was put in simple language by a Churchwarden from one of the sea-coast towns.

I hope you will not think me presuming if, as an humble individual, I venture to express to your Lordship my grateful thanks for your outspoken pronouncements. I have no intention of following your Lordship

in your treatment of the various subjects included in your address, but you will, I trust, permit me to remark, how much I have been struck by the manly, generous and fatherly tone which characterised your Lordship's utterances, and by the absolute fairness which ran through them. At a time like the present such encouragement is most welcome. I have all along felt secure in relying on your Lordship's English love of fair play, a quality which I venture to think, if generally followed by those in authority, would do more than anything else to tranquillise men's minds and temper controversy, now alas ! at fever heat. I rejoice in being able to feel perfect confidence in your Lordship's fatherly disposition to hold the scales of justice with an even hand all round.

But there was a minority, remarkable for the strength of its language, on whom the charge acted like the proverbial red rag, and the Ultra-Protestants from all parts of the country joined merrily in the fray. From the large collection preserved by Bishop Wilberforce the following effusion on the part of an anonymous Birmingham correspondent must suffice ; it is a mild and moderate specimen.

My Lord, it is evident you don't like the truth, but I can assure you the laity are going to teach all you Bishops a lesson, and it will be a very painful one. We have got the bit in our mouths and we do not mean to take it out till we have perfected our work. The Bishops are as bad as their perjured priests. I should think you must imagine that the public are fools when you say it is only a few that are trying to take the Church bodily to Rome. The laity have no faith in the Bishops ; they are impotent. Between now and December such a stir will be created that the Church will tremble, and I hope, please God, all the treacherous Bishops will be driven out.

Ernest Wilberforce had been accustomed to anonymous letters in the old Seaforth days, and treated them at their proper valuation. His answer to a writer who had the courage and courtesy to sign his name may be taken as an example of his faithful dealing with honest opponents. One of the Vice-Presidents of the Brighton branch of the Church Association had strongly resented the Bishop's allusions to some of the controversial methods adopted by that body, and the Bishop answered him in the following terms :—

DEAR MR. B.,—Permit me to say that you have a perfect right to your own opinion, and that the Church Association has a perfect right to its opinion, and both have a right to try and enforce their opinions. What I would ask you to consider is, whether it is right in the sight of God to try and enforce those opinions by the most uncharitable imputations upon others, and by plain breaches of the ninth Commandment; and whether it is possible that the Lord's work can be done in this manner? You can scarcely wonder if I venture to express righteous indignation at such a course. If you will do me the pleasure to come and lunch with me, and talk matters over when I return home from a short absence I could make my meaning more clear, and perhaps tell you of some matters which may not have come to your knowledge.

In the following year the Bishop seized the occasion of his Diocesan Conference at Tunbridge Wells¹ to make his position still plainer. Passing in rapid review the burning topics of the hour he pleaded for the fuller recognition of the duty of obedience, for more patience and self-restraint, for Christian charity, for closer union 'against the common foes represented by the one word—"sin."' The address was perhaps the strongest

¹ November 8 and 9, 1899.

delivery of the faith that was in him which ever proceeded from his lips ; and there were members of the Conference who did not hesitate to class it with the famous charge of Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury, ‘ among the most truly Episcopal utterances since the Reformation.’ A few extracts will suffice to illustrate the spirit in which he sought to bring the jarring elements throughout his diocese into unity.

The whole idea of the rights, and position, and heritage, of the Church of England has risen in the minds of men of every school of thought, as a consequence of revived spiritual life. Reformed from many errors and superstitious uses of the past (to say nothing now of doctrine) she stands before men’s eyes as the creation of Christ and His Apostles, with her long story of the past ; and as planted here originally in the providence of God as an integral portion of His Catholic Church, Her doctrines are not new, but old. She has a great heritage from the past. This constitutes and establishes her right to teach. The teaching of the true idea of the worship of a present God has in many minds led to a desire for accessories of worship which shall more fully express that sense of His Presence ; and men have claimed to use what appears to them legitimately included in that heritage from the past, while others are content with and prefer what seems to them, while a simpler, a more spiritual form of service. It is a great mistake to think that changes in forms of service, in whichever direction they may tend, are due to the clergy alone. It is very often that the laity ask, and the clergy grant. Perhaps you will remember a letter in the fourth volume of Dr. Pusey’s *Life*, page 363, where he says, in a letter written to the *Times* in 1881, ‘ Whatever mistakes any of the Ritualists made formerly, no Ritualist would now, I believe, wish to make any change without the hearty goodwill of the people. But all along, those who have closely observed the Ritual

movement, have seen that it has been especially the work of the laity ; while the clergyman has been hesitating, his parishioners have often presented him with the vestments which they wished him to wear.'

And the same influence, though in an opposite direction, is seen in many a Low Church congregation, where the laity restrain, when the incumbent would wish for some small advance in ritual ; and though within certain broadly defined limits of obedience to the Prayer Book, some liberty of understanding the directions in the Prayer Book has been wisely tolerated if not sanctioned, yet there are limits on both sides, and the principles, rather than the details of such limitation, are before us now. There are very many clergy who are neglecting the apparently plain rubrics of the Prayer Book on the one side, if some seem to be exceeding them on the other—clergy who seem to read certain directions out of the Prayer Book, if others seem to read directions into it. There are plain rubrics as to daily service, giving out and observing fasts and festivals, the use of the Athanasian Creed, the use of the Office for the Visitation of the Sick, not to mention others, which are largely treated as obsolete by many clergy ; while again some seem to find an authority for ceremonies which others fail to recognise. My brethren, we ought to have no invisible ink in the rubrics of our Prayer Book to be warmed into life, or left unwarmed, only by individual fires. Defining authority there must be, and it must be acknowledged. Nor is the Church of England Congregational or Presbyterian in her methods, nor can 'conscience' be pleaded as a bar to authority ; for every ordained man solemnly promises reverently to obey his Ordinary and other chief ministers of the Church, and those to whom the charge and government over him is committed, following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions ; while to this every priest at his ordination adds the solemn declaration that he will give his faithful diligence always so to minister the doctrine and sacraments and the discipline of Christ 'as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and

realm hath received the same.' The conscience of every clergyman of the Church of England is thus already prejudiced and pledged in favour of obedience to the authority set over him.

And here, perhaps, you will allow me to refer to the treatment of this question of conscience by the Bishops in their answer to the ministers at the Savoy Conference of 1604, quoted in Cardwell's *Conferences*, page 347. They make short work of it:—'Pretence of conscience is no exemption from obedience, for the law, as long as it is a law, certainly binds us to obedience (Romans xiii, *Ye must needs be subject*), and this pretence of a tender gainsaying conscience cannot abrogate the law, since it can neither take away the authority of the law-makers, nor make the matter of the law in itself unlawful. Besides, if pretence of conscience did exempt from obedience, laws were useless; whosoever had not list to obey might pretend tenderness of conscience, and be thereby set at liberty, which, if once granted, anarchy and confusion must needs follow.' But if law be appealed to, bare and naked law, then it must needs be applied to defect as well as to excess. If law be invoked, it will constrain the one, as well as restrain the other. He who neglects the Church's rules can hardly expect to go scot-free, while he clamours for the application of the law to the exceeeder of those rules. If conscience is claimed as a sovereign plea on the one hand, it is equally paramount on the other. Well, my brethren, it is obvious that there must be law, order, rule in every society, and means of enforcing these, unless that society is presently to fall to pieces. Any society that surrenders the sword must before long abandon the sceptre. But is it desirable, even if possible, that the coercive jurisdiction of the law should be appealed to in every case of excess or defect? Would that tend to peace and gentleness and love, or to a furtherance of spiritual life and work? Would you force a rigid iron uniformity in every single detail of public worship upon every congregation in the land whether of High or Low Church tendencies; or be content with the

uniform use of the services of the Prayer Book in all services that are not 'special' under the Act of 1872, with some variations in matters ceremonial, so that such are covered by the law of the Church, and the mind of the Church of England ?

I do not think that to hector or dragoon would tend to develop spiritual life ; and if so, once more, what is the principle on which we should act ? This is provided for, as it seems to me, in our Prayer Book. It reminds us that the particular forms of Divine worship, and the rites and ceremonies appointed to be used therein, being things in their own nature indifferent and alterable, and so acknowledged, it is but reasonable that upon weighty and important considerations, such changes and alterations should be made therein as to those that are in place of authority should from time to time seem either necessary or expedient. And the principle on which changes have been made in our Prayer Book is stated, 'so as that the main body and essentials of it' (that is the Public Liturgy), 'as well in the chiefest materials, as in the frame and order thereof, have still continued the same unto this day.' Then we are told that some ceremonies have been retained and some abolished, and the reason why. But fortunately, or unfortunately, no schedule of the retained or abolished ceremonies was appended by our Reformers. Still that some are distinctly said to be abolished seems to me to destroy the argument sometimes used, that the Church of England has no right to abandon any practice that was once a practice of the Catholic Church, whether such practice be now mentioned in the Prayer Book or not.

And if we ask what tribunal the Prayer Book suggests when matters are in doubt, the intermediate Preface supplies it. The Bishop is to be referred to, with appeal to the Archbishop, if the Bishop himself be in doubt. We are sometimes told that this Preface refers only to the new Order of Morning and Evening Prayer, which at that period were strange to the clergy. But the Prayer Book does not say so, and its words must be taken as they stand. It says 'The things contained in this

book,' and it calls itself 'The Book of Common Prayer and administration of the Sacraments and other rites and ceremonies of the Church, according to the use of the Church of England (with the Psalms and ordination services).' That definition covers the whole ground as I see the question. Either the administration of the sacraments and other rites and ceremonies of the Church are contained in the Prayer Book or they are not; and if they are contained in it, they come under the directions of the Preface I refer to.

Of course, the Bishop himself is bound by the law of the Church, and can order nothing contrary to that which is contained in the Prayer Book. It seems to me that this is the method of the Church's own appointing, and the meaning of the solemn declaration of obedience to the Ordinary, and that in the loyal carrying out of that direction the true way to peace will be found. Not peace for the Bishop; but anyone who tries, nay is absolutely determined to the best of his power, to hold the balance fairly amid contending parties—who recognises and heartily sympathises with the good work done by many men of very different opinions, and apparently diverse practices, is sure of many hard words, of much misunderstanding, and possibly of a good deal of obloquy. That is merely a necessary part of the burden of the episcopal office. But in all such exercise of his fatherly guidance, the Bishop can look, and not in vain, to the moral support of the great body of Churchmen, lay and cleric; and certainly I have personally to thank you for your kindness, your support, your generous overlooking of my many deficiencies, patent to none more plainly than myself, which has so greatly assisted me in my onerous, responsible, and sometimes most difficult work. But beginning with the fatherly authority of the Bishop, the principle takes us further still, to the speedy restitution of the Spiritual Courts, the Bishops' Courts, the Provincial Courts, with a Court of Appeal to which the defendant might appeal for lack of justice, Courts before which these questions could again come on their merits. My own belief is that if these two Spiritual

Courts—diocesan and provincial—were so re-established, with strong assessors learned in ecclesiastical and canon law, they would in themselves suffice, in most cases, without appeal to the Court beyond ; being found to bind men's consciences, as well as to speak with a voice of authority, though an appeal must lie beyond them. But I look further, to the reform of Convocation, to some method whereby the voice of the Church may be heard, to that most desirable thing, some kind of spiritual autonomy, so that, in matters purely spiritual, the Church may be able to settle matters for herself without recourse to Parliament ; the Church, not the clergy alone, the Church with her clergy and laity.

Whether under such a state of things there would still be as much freedom as the clergy now possess is quite another matter. I greatly doubt it myself, but a voice so expressed would be a voice to be obeyed. Matters have indeed greatly changed since the Church and the State in her Parliaments were one ; and I should imagine there can hardly be an earnest-minded man in the House of Commons, of what denomination soever, who does not feel that Parliament is not now the proper area for the settlement of things purely spiritual. In things temporal Parliament must always be supreme. There are things which belong to Caesar of right, but things purely spiritual should be removed to another tribunal. Meanwhile we come back to the fatherly authority of the Bishop, according to the mind of the Catholic Church ; and for the sake of the Church itself, and the preservation of her heritage derived from the past, a heritage purified from mediæval abuses and Roman Catholic additions, I trust that that authority will be deferred to, even when in individual instances it seems to bear hardly upon a cherished rite, custom, or observance. There must be some defining authority, some power of saying this does not belong to the lawful Catholic heritage of the Church ; or again, this rite or ceremony is in the category of things somewhat doubtful, in which the discretion of the Bishop can be exercised. The Prayer Book provides such an authority

for immediate needs, and I am thankful to see so many clergy already have, and I trust all will, submit themselves to this plain discretion of the Church. I am certain they will prove to be the truest defenders of the Church's heritage, and the most helpful and loyal of her sons, who now suspend the liturgical use of incense—dear as the custom may have become to them, innocent, and pleasing as well, as the custom itself is—who suspend such use until the question of legality comes before the re-established Spiritual Courts on its merits, or until the voice of the Church itself is again able to be heard. . . .

I spoke on the subject of private confession at considerable length in the Charge delivered to the diocese last year; but since that time a return has been asked for, and made to the House of Lords, which requires me to say a few more words on the subject. The return was as to the number of churches belonging to the Church of England in which confessional boxes have been erected. That return may have somewhat surprised the movers for it. For in the whole of England, I find from the return, one, and only one, such box exists in churches belonging to the Church of England. In two dioceses such a box exists in a private chapel; in another diocese there are five adaptations used instead of a confessional box; and in the diocese of Chichester there are four churches where screens are arranged for this purpose, and in one other church there are three very small rooms in the vestry, not in the church, where the clergyman can sit in the centre of the room and speak to people through a small window in the rooms on either hand. I am quoting from the official report. Now bearing in mind what I said last year, as to the limitations put upon private confession by the Church of England, and assuming that in all cases private confession is not made to be a condition indispensable to the forgiveness of sin after baptism, and that it is really a voluntary act on the part of the penitent, the Prayer Book gives, under conditions which she specifies, an undoubted right of private confession to those who find their

consciences burdened, and who are unable to quiet those consciences, as well as distinctly bidding the clergy, in the Order for Visitation of the Sick, to 'move' the sick person to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. And if there is to be any private confession at all on the part of the 'whole,' is it not better that it should be made in the open church, for the sake of both the priest and the penitent, rather than in some hole or corner fashion? What can be more undesirable in such cases than the locked door of vestry or study, or what better than the low, open screens spoken of as existing in these four Brighton churches, where such publicity is secured as is compatible with sufficient privacy, and such privacy as there may be with a proper amount of publicity? It seems to me a matter of simple common-sense.

Many things had happened in the ecclesiastical world between the charge of July 1898 and the address to the Tunbridge Conference in November 1899. For the first time in the history of the Church of England the two Archbishops had availed themselves of the procedure prescribed by the Preface to the Prayer Book for the appeasing of diversity in use and practice and the resolution of doubts 'concerning the manner how to understand, do, and execute the things contained in this book.' Certain Bishops, of whom Ernest Wilberforce was not one, had declared themselves in doubt as to the lawfulness of the use of incense and of processional lights in public worship, and had referred the matter to the Archbishops. The cases in question had arisen in both Provinces, and the two Archbishops, Dr. Temple and Dr. Maclagan, sat together at Lambeth, and for several days in succession listened to the arguments of Counsel. Judgment was given by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the name of himself and his Most

Reverend brother on July 31, 1899.¹ Their Graces felt obliged to come to the conclusion that the use of incense in the public worship, and as a part of that worship, was not at present enjoined nor permitted by the law of the Church of England, and that the line of reasoning followed by them applied equally to the carrying of lights in procession.

In January 1901 a letter was issued to the clergy of England and Wales, signed by both the Archbishops and by the whole of the diocesan Bishops, calling on them to submit to the decision thus given in accordance with the direction of the Book of Common Prayer.² This exhortation was printed in the *Chichester Diocesan Gazette* for February, a copy of which was sent to every incumbent in the diocese, with a covering letter from the Bishop in which he expressed the earnest hope that such an expression of the united voice of the Episcopate would

be the means of awakening any whose standard falls below that set by the Church of England to more scrupulous faithfulness in the discharge of their solemn obligations; while it may help any whose practices conflict with the decisions lately given after great consideration by the Archbishops to render faithful obedience to the monitions of their Bishops.

But for some time prior to the issue of the episcopal encyclical the use of portable lights and incense throughout the Chichester diocese had been reduced almost to vanishing point. By personal entreaty, by argument, by appeals to their ordination vow, the Bishop had obtained the submission of five out of the

¹ See *Life of Archbishop Temple*, ii. 194.

² The letter also covered the decision given in similar circumstances on the Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, *infra*, p. 269.

nine incumbents who at first disregarded the Lambeth directions :¹ the other four remained obdurate. The correspondence on the Bishop's side is marked by extreme patience and forbearance. Many of the letters on the other side reveal a picture of conflicting duties and of agitated consciences which must have made the Bishop's task most difficult and distasteful. In some cases, however, there was a touch of hardness and arrogance which elicited on appropriate display of firmness and plain speaking on the part of the Bishop. I give a specimen of each class.

MY DEAR LORD (wrote a Brighton incumbent, who in the end submitted himself),—Your kind consideration for us in our difficulties on a former occasion encourages me to appeal to your generosity now not to press your request with regard to Incense and Processional Lights at our Church. I will not presume to trouble you with any reasons which might be urged on the general question and which (no doubt) have already been brought before your notice. I would only ask you to consider some of the reasons which apply to this particular Church. . . . Since the introduction of a more ornate service the collections have gone up very largely. This will show that our greatly increased congregation is not made up of mere sight-seers. Most of our worshippers are poor or of small means. They have given most generously, and at the cost of much sacrifice to themselves, for the support of those services as well as for the ordinary expenses of the Church. . . . But most of all do I beg for your consideration on account of the consequences to the spiritual life of many if their

¹ The Churches which retained the use of portable lights and incense in defiance of Lambeth were all at Brighton—St. Bartholomew's, the Church of the Annunciation, St. Martin's and St. Mary Magdalen; those which submitted were All Souls and the Church of the Resurrection at Brighton, St. Andrew's at Worthing, Christ Church at St. Leonards, and All Souls at Hastings. Submission was also procured in the religious community of St. Margaret's, East Grinstead.

enthusiasm is damped and those things are cast aside which are to them the outward expression of vital truths. They are most attached to their present form of service and would feel very much such a sweeping alteration as you ask of us. The disuse of Incense could only result in the breaking up of a congregation which has been slowly and patiently built up. May I add further what I feel very strongly—that the patience of our best and most devout people has been tried for many years to the utmost, through the discouragement of past attacks, and the continued repression by those in authority. And that all this constitutes a very real danger to souls and makes them ask whether the Church of England is really a living part of the Catholic Church or what her enemies and some of her friends assert—a mere National Institution.

To this the Bishop replied :

I thank you for the courteous tone of your letter. But this is not a matter in which I have any option, and therefore such an appeal as yours can have but one answer. Do you not think the true Catholic heritage of the Church is as dear to the Archbishops and myself as it can be to you ? For what have I been labouring all these years but this ? But when it comes to a definition of what are the details of Catholic heritage, then it is not for individual Presbyters to stand on their private judgment, but loyally to keep to the solemn promises they made at their Ordination and reverently to obey their Ordinary. Believe me, you will far more certainly imperil this heritage of the Church by refusing obedience now than by obeying even if under protest. You must remember that the ceremonial use of Incense has already been pronounced to be beyond the law of the Church of England by a thoroughly spiritual Court, by the Court of Arches, presided over by no less an authority than the late Sir Robert Phillimore. It must be now either obedience or anarchy, and I feel sure you will choose the former. I will gladly see you if you wish it and talk matters over.

Now for the other side of the shield : the following letter, written in January 1901, is from one who had been already admonished but had refused to obey.

I have seen the joint addresses of the Bishops, and can only express my surprise that after all that has been published, and in face of such arguments and evidence as are to be found for example in the additional chapters of Canon MacColl's ' Reformation Settlement,' the Bishops as a body can be found willing to back up the Archbishops' misrepresentation of the Book of Common Prayer and its Preface. The evidence is conclusive that Queen Elizabeth forced the insertion of the ' Ornaments Rubric ' in order to legalise all the ceremonies (incense included) which were in use at the *commencement* of Edward VI.'s reign, whilst she gave way as to the adoption of Edward VI.'s second book with certain important alterations. The Bishops' appeal to Catholic doctrine, etc., is absurd, and entirely one-sided in face of their flagrant disregard of much that is both primitive and Catholic. Their address also contains most dangerous claims to infallibility which one is bound to resist, and which, if yielded to, might be applied without limit to the extermination of any doctrine or practice whatever, and leave us subject to charges of disobedience and disloyalty if we did not at once obey any ' opinion ' that might be promulgated. I must again repeat how deeply I deplore the position we find ourselves placed in, and feel that our expulsion would come as a relief to many of us.

I am very sorry to read your letter (answered the Bishop); it convinces me that you will submit your judgment to no one. I am surprised that you should mistake the Bishops' assertions or their undoubted authority for ' a most dangerous claim to infallibility.' It appears to me that it would be more just to attribute that claim to yourself and the few others who set themselves and their judgments^{as} against the united opinions of their Fathers-in-God. But I will say no more

except that I can only regard as absurd the contention that Queen Elizabeth intended to legalise all the ceremonies in use at the commencement of Edward VI.'s reign. That would have been to bring back the whole of what was contained in, and done under, the Order of Communion Service, published by Act of Parliament in the beginning of that reign, and would have been exposed in a moment. But I am sad at heart and shall write no more unless it please Almighty God to bring you to the obedience you owe and now refuse.

The clergy who thus stood out against their Diocesan did so with a full consciousness of what their action might entail. 'Of course, I know,' wrote one of them, 'that the next step must be ejection.' But this was not in the Bishop's contemplation: the unhappy years which followed the passing of the Public Worship Regulation Act had taught him the futility of prosecutions.

From your mention of ejection (he replied), I presume that you expect me to prosecute you. I shall do nothing of the kind. I shall leave you to your conscience, and pray that God will enlighten it, and grant you the graces of humility and submission, and that you may hereafter seek to repair this grievous breach of Catholic discipline. And I shall continue to treat you as a son, though your treatment hereafter must be that of a disobedient son. And if God gives you the Grace I shall not cease to pray for, I shall be glad to receive you again to full sonship. Meanwhile certain consequences follow necessarily upon such disobedience as yours. It will be impossible for me, while you disobey my monitions, to take any part in the services of your church. It will be impossible for me to consider you a proper person to entrust with the training of a young Deacon, while you show this example of disobedience, though I shall in no way seek to prevent you finding a fellow helper already in Holy Orders. And, should occasion arise, it will be a very grave matter for consideration

whether I could exercise my powers of vetoing a prosecution in the case of a Priest who has flatly refused obedience to his Bishop's monition.¹

But while strictly enjoining obedience to the '*ipsisima verba*' of the Archbishops, Ernest Wilberforce was not prepared, any more than Bishop Creighton, to go a step beyond them; and he did not feel compelled to interfere with the use of incense before or after the service, so long as there was no 'censing' of persons or things. It must be said that a very liberal construction was given to this act of forbearance.

The voluminous correspondence in which the Bishop strove and reasoned with his clergy shows an intense anxiety on his part that they should understand his desire to be fair and in his own words 'to be a Father-in-God to all earnest workers of whatever shade of opinion.' 'I really think,' he writes to one of the less intractable, 'that Priests (to put the matter no higher) should do the utmost in their power to help the Bishops who wish to defend them, and to preserve to the Church all her undoubted Catholic privileges, and who are bearing a far greater burden of constant obloquy and of unmerited suspicion in consequence than probably you have any idea of.' Nor was it only with the clergy that he wrestled; and the following letter to a churchwarden in one of the Brighton churches, an army officer of rank, is an excellent example of his dealing with the devout laity. He had invited his correspondent to come over and spend the night at the Palace. 'It is very good of you to see me,' was the answer; 'having said a great many hard things of your Lordship behind your back

¹ A similar monition was served on the three other disobedient incumbents; the terms of it were strictly observed, and the Bishop refused to visit or to hold confirmations in any of their churches.

I can scarcely dare to decline to meet you face to face.'

I look upon Bishops (rejoined his Diocesan) as naturally ordained to be abused by everybody, and I really cannot object to your saying any mortal thing about me that you please. But I am sure you have only said what you thought right, and what a gentleman would allow himself to say, and your letter appeals to me as being the letter of a *man*, a person I always respect even when I don't agree with him; though I have no respect for an invertebrate jellyfish. So do come and have a thorough talk; you can say anything you please to say, and I shan't take offence. I may not expect you to agree with me, but at least I have a right to ask that you shall try to understand really what is my meaning, and what the position I feel bound to take as a Bishop of the Church of God, and will maintain in spite of any amount of misunderstanding and in the face of any kind of obloquy.

The Bishop's position in enforcing the Lambeth decision on portable lights and incense had been somewhat complicated by the opinion of Archbishop Temple, delivered in June 1900, on the question of the Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.¹ After a careful consideration of the arguments laid before him the Archbishop of Canterbury had decided 'that the Church of England does not at present allow Reservation in any form, and that those who think it ought to be allowed, though perfectly justified in endeavouring to get the proper authorities to alter the law, are not justified in practising Reservation until the law has been altered.'

This sweeping sentence involved in one condemnation the practice of taking the consecrated elements at

¹ As his decision was invoked by Bishops of the Southern Province only, Archbishop Maclagan was not consulted.

the time of administration to persons not able to be present in the church ; the keeping back a portion of the consecrated elements in order to administer them to certain sick persons at a later period of the day ; and the keeping back a portion of the consecrated elements in case there should be a sudden demand for communicating a dying person. But for one or other of these practices their advocates had a considerable mass of episcopal support ; the first of them ‘ Dr. Benson believed to be lawful, Dr. Westcott allowed, and other Bishops are prepared to allow on sufficient cause shown.’¹

The chaplains in some of the great hospitals practised Reservation in its widest sense with the approval or at least the permission of their Diocesans. And the practical difficulties in the way of administration of the Office for the Communion of the Sick which Archbishop Temple had lightly brushed aside were fully recognised by those Bishops who had laboured like Ernest Wilberforce in the slums and common lodging-houses of a great town. To Reservation, after the Roman fashion, as practised in the extreme High Churches, with the concomitant ‘ Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament,’ and the Service of Benediction, he was not prepared to give the faintest sanction, and he had refused to recognise the Sisters of St. Margaret’s, East Grinstead, by becoming their visitor until he had received the most positive assurance that the Benediction Service would be discontinued by their chaplain.²

¹ So writes the present Bishop of Bristol, *Life of Archbishop Temple*, ii. 305.

² In a letter to the *Times* of August 18, 1910, the Rev. Arthur Cocks, then Vicar of St. Bartholomew’s, Brighton, but who was shortly afterwards received into the Church of Rome, asserted that the Service of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament was in use in his church ‘ throughout the episcopate of Bishop Wilberforce without any prohibition or comment on his part.’ St. Bartholomew’s was one of the churches which the Bishop had

But he could not bring himself to impose an absolute prohibition on the reservation of the elements for the sick and the dying.

‘I expect,’ he had said to a clergyman newly appointed to an important living in his diocese, ‘that, like myself, you have a great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament; we shall agree there.’ The Holy Eucharist was the foundation of his religious life, and it was inconceivably distressing to him to appear to place any stumbling-block in the way of either priest or communicant. To a few parish priests, therefore, who had large and poor populations he gave permission to reserve Holy Communion for the sick and dying, under the following stringent regulations:—

(1) That where the sick person asks for the service set out in the Prayer Book for the Communion of the Sick, there that service shall be used.

(2) That the Sacrament shall be reserved and administered in *both* kinds.

(3) That the Reserved Sacrament shall not be kept in the Church, but in a chapel, room, building, or vestry, to which none but the priests of the parish have access, and shall be kept under lock and key.

(4) That there shall be no procession or other show in the street, but that the Reserved Sacrament shall be quietly carried to the sick person.

(5) That whatever remains of the Reserved Sacrament from one day shall be consumed at the ‘Ablutions’ at the open Sacrament the following day.

This (he added in his instruction to the half-dozen clergy to whom permission was granted) will secure all that is required for *bona fide* reservation for the sick, and contains no unreasonable demand. There can

declined to visit on account of the incumbent’s disobedience to his monition. I imagine (there is no record in his correspondence) that, acting on his principle that he was not a spy but a judge, he declined to take action until his interference was invoked officially.

be no difficulty in reserving in both kinds, as this is actually what is in practice in the Scotch Church. There they have a specially constructed phial which prevents any irreverence or what may be jarring to the feelings, and, if you wish it, I can easily find out where this is to be obtained.

It was a strong and a bold step to be taken by a Bishop who had signed the exhortation to obey the Lambeth Opinions which I have quoted on an earlier page. On logical grounds it is difficult to defend, but Ernest Wilberforce was prepared to sacrifice logic rather than provoke a disastrous conflict which must endanger for a time at any rate a great and noble work for Christ carried on under conditions of difficulty which he, better than anyone, had means of appreciating. It was frankly an arrogation of a dispensing power exerted in special circumstances to meet a danger the gravity of which he had carefully weighed.¹

A letter written by the Bishop to the late Right Hon. J. G. Talbot, M.P., in December 1900, subsequent to the Lambeth Opinions, but prior to the publication of the Episcopal Encyclical, affords a good idea in few words of the line taken up by him on the series of questions which were then being forced upon the attention of Parliament and of the public. A resolution had been recently carried in the House of Commons declaring that 'if the efforts now being made by the Archbishops and Bishops to secure the obedience of the Clergy are not speedily effectual, further legislation will be required to maintain the observance of the existing Laws of Church and Realm,' and several rival 'Clergy Discipline' Bills had been drafted and circulated. Mr. Arthur Balfour,

¹ 'I am in the same difficulty as you are,' wrote Bishop Creighton to him about this time. 'If we wreck good work in a few parishes, there will be a reaction as usual.'

leader of the House of Commons, though not yet Prime Minister, was extremely anxious for first-hand information as to the reception of the Lambeth Opinions, and the general spirit prevailing among the clergy. Chichester diocese was, so to speak, a 'scheduled area,' and the member for Oxford University was an appropriate conduit pipe.

DEAR MR. TALBOT (wrote the Bishop),—In answer to your letter of December 19th, I am glad to say that a good deal has already been done in this diocese towards enforcing obedience to the Archbishops' decisions as respects the ceremonial use of Incense and the use of Portable Lights. While, if time is given, I have great hopes of being able to do even more, and even in the case of those who, at present, decline to obey, I think that at any change of Incumbency much may be done to secure further obedience. The difficulty in this case, however, is two-fold. (1) That the law does not give a Bishop sufficient power in refusing to institute an Incumbent; (2) That in many cases the real difficulty lies with the congregation, who are deeply attached to certain forms of ritual, rather than with the Incumbent. We had nine Churches where Incense and Portable Lights were used *ceremonially*. The Incumbents of five of these submit, while four at present decline. I believe that if the alternative use of Edward VI.'s first Prayer Book were granted, where, say, two-thirds of the congregation signed a petition in its favour, (and the cases would not be many,) most of the trouble would disappear. For the 'Reservation' there permitted is quite distinct from that now generally practised; it is of *both* kinds, is to be carried to the sick as soon as convenient, and practically would do away with the reservation of the Consecrated Elements in Churches for the purpose of Adoration, while there is not a mention of Incense in the book from first to last. The vulgar crusade against 'the Confessional' and 'the Mass' ignores wholly the use of private confession and

absolution at the direction of the penitent, enjoined by the present Prayer Book, and the teaching of that Book in the Communion Service, and the Catechism, and the Real though Spiritual presence of our Blessed Lord in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, and as to 'His Body and Blood being verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Supper of the Lord.' This may possibly answer your question, without troubling you at any greater length, but I am quite ready to answer any further questions you may like to put to me, and you are at liberty to use this letter as you may see fit. I am ever yours sincerely,

ERNEST R. CICESTR.

CHAPTER XII

BISHOP OF CHICHESTER—1896-1907 (*continued*)

The Church of the Annunciation at Brighton—The Bishop refuses to exercise his right of trying the case in person—His remonstrances with the advanced clergy—Evening Communion—Unwarranted publication of the Bishop's private letters—His evidence before the Commission on Ecclesiastical Disorders—Sisterhoods and dispensations from vows—The trouble at St. Andrew's, Worthing.

THOUGH the extremists in the Chichester diocese were few in number they were a source of never-ending perplexity to the Bishop. He was placed indeed in a very painful dilemma. He was well aware of their devoted lives and ceaseless labour among the poor and neglected; with some of them he was on terms of private friendship amounting to intimacy; and the methods adopted by their opponents were calculated, not unfrequently, to awake in him that fighting instinct which was never far below the surface. On the other hand he had scant sympathy with much that they taught; he disliked their elaborate ritual, and he could not be blind to the fact that some of their services, and many of the accessories of worship to be found in their churches, were contrary to the law of the Church of England. He was deeply dissatisfied with the constitution and working of the existing ecclesiastical courts; but as an English Bishop, faithful to the vows he had

taken at his Ordination and at his Consecration, he could give no countenance to those who pleaded as a warrant for this license a visionary 'law of the Church' which took shape in something very like congregationalism.

The advanced ritual was most conspicuous at Brighton, where the population had grown by leaps and bounds, and where the influence of the Rev. A. D. Wagner, the Vicar of St. Paul's, had made itself felt in a great work of Church extension on very High Church lines. But the Church Association was also active and aggressive,¹ and the word had gone out for a vigorous forward policy. The first point chosen for attack was the Church of the Annunciation, serving a district carved out of the parish of St. Paul, with a population of 6000 souls composed almost entirely of the families of artisans and small tradesmen. It was one of the churches which had defied the monition to abandon portable lights and the ceremonial use of incense, and had accordingly come under the ban set forth in the last chapter;² and the incumbent, the Rev. H. F. Hinde, had further refused to accept the terms upon which the Bishop had offered to sanction the Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. But when an odious charge of putting immodest questions in the Confessional was preferred against Mr. Hinde, Ernest Wilberforce had promptly checked the slander by appointing a commission of inquiry. And on receiving an unanimous report that the charge was entirely without foundation, he had forced the author, though not without difficulty, to make a complete apology. In January 1899 a petition was presented

¹ At the general election of October 1900 Mr. Kensit, standing simply as 'a Protestant,' in sublime disregard of secular politics, had polled nearly 5000 votes.

² P. 267.

in the Consistory Court of the Archdeaconry of Lewes praying for a Faculty to remove the Stations of the Cross, the confessional boxes,¹ crucifixes, tabernacles, water-stoups, and the images of the Blessed Virgin, of the Sacred Heart, and of St. Joseph, some of which 'ornaments,' to use the words of the rubric, had been in the church at the date of its consecration in 1884,² while others were later additions. The petitioner was a Mr. Davey, who, by renting a room at ten shillings a week, had made himself a parishioner and ratepayer, qualified to set the machinery of the law in motion.

On January 4, 1900, the case came on for hearing at Lewes, before Dr. Tristram, the Chancellor of the diocese; both parties were represented by a strong 'Bar'; in their pleadings, the respondents, who were the Vicar and Churchwardens, had claimed that, before any decision was come to, the Bishop of the diocese should be consulted and his consent obtained, and they further prayed that he should examine and determine the cause in his own person in the Consistory Court. This contention the Chancellor refused to entertain; it was a matter purely of jurisdiction, he said, which, if necessary, the temporal courts would decide, and after a prolonged hearing he gave judgment³ in favour of the petitioner on practically all the points involved. The respondents without delay applied to the King's Bench Division of the High Court of Justice for a writ of prohibition to restrain the Chancellor from further proceedings in the suit or giving effect to his judgment

¹ The Bishop was informed that these 'boxes' were in reality low screens 'affording sufficient privacy, while ensuring enough publicity to protect both priest and penitent'; see his charge quoted at p. 261.

² By Bishop Tufnell acting for Bishop Durnford.

³ August 21, 1900.

until he had consulted the Bishop of Chichester and obtained his consent to 'hear, decide and finally determine the said suit.' The application was grounded on the peculiar terms of the patent ¹ under which Dr. Tristram held his office. This instrument, after conferring on the Chancellor the jurisdiction to hear and determine 'all and singular causes businesses suits and complaints spiritual and ecclesiastical,' concluded with the proviso 'nevertheless first consulting us and our successors and having our consent in case either party earnestly crave our judgment.' The Judges in the Divisional Court, Sir Charles Darling and Sir Arthur Channell, refused to grant the writ, but in the Court of Appeal, the Master of the Rolls (Sir Richard Henn Collins) and Lord Justices Romer and Mathew took a different view. They decided unanimously ² that the limitation in the patent had the effect of excluding the jurisdiction of the Chancellor in cases where the parties or either of them craved the judgment of the Bishop himself, unless upon consultation the Bishop consented to his assuming it. A writ of prohibition issued accordingly against the Chancellor and also against the petitioner. The latter immediately made a formal request to the Chancellor 'to consult the Bishop of Chichester as to the re-hearing of the case.' Bishop Wilberforce was now at liberty to re-open the whole matter, sitting as sole Judge in his own Consistory Court. He was strongly urged from some quarters to adopt this course ; and the prospect of obtaining a judgment in an ecclesiastical cause from a purely spiritual tribunal was hailed with delight by those who had always protested against the authority of the

¹ The only other diocese in which the Chancellor's patent was drawn in the same way was that of Ely.

² March 10, 1902.

Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and of the Court of Arches as reconstructed under the Public Worship Regulation Act. The Bishop had convinced himself that the promoter of the suit was not a duly qualified 'aggrieved parishioner,' and he was sorely tempted to cut the Gordian knot by giving effect to this opinion in his judicial capacity. If the petitioner were ruled out of Court, the petition would be at an end, and there was little prospect that a *bona fide* parishioner would be induced to come forward in his place. On the other hand it would be an unprecedented step for a Bishop to overrule his own legal adviser, an old ecclesiastical lawyer of great experience, on what was practically the construction of statute and case law. There was not the slightest prospect of his judgment being acquiesced in by Mr. Davey and there was open before him a long vista of appeals in which it was highly probable that the Courts would lean to the view of the lawyer against that of the Bishop. Another consideration operated strongly on his mind. The Vicar of the Church of the Annunciation was one of the half-dozen recalcitrant clergy who had been warned that he should not feel disposed to exercise his veto in the event of proceedings being instituted against them.

After mature consideration, therefore, he informed Dr. Tristram, on May 3, 1902, that he gave consent to his 'hearing, deciding and determining the said suit.' The case was retried *ab initio*, and on August 7 the Chancellor made an order addressed to the churchwardens for the removal of the Ornaments. The order was disobeyed, a policy of passive resistance was adopted, and in the following April a faculty issued in the name of the Bishop confirming his Chancellor's decision, and

authorising the petitioners to remove the ornaments.¹ The removal was forcibly effected, to an accompaniment of painful incidents, the main responsibility for which must rest with those who had so persistently obstructed the orders of the Court. Even then the trouble was not at an end. The faculty only allowed the petitioners to remove the ornaments; it declared the property in them to be vested in the churchwardens, and they were accordingly handed over to the Vicar by the promoters of the suit. It was fully expected that they would be restored to their former positions, but this was not done.

‘The ornaments,’ as I am informed by the incumbent of a Brighton church, ‘were never put back in the church again. Instead of the crucifix on the altar they had a most beautiful figure of Christ painted on the wooden cross, and instead of the stations they had a cross painted on the wall with just the number to show which station it was. And instead of the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary they had a picture of our Lady of Perpetual Succour.’

This brief narrative may help to explain Bishop Wilberforce’s dislike of ritual prosecutions. At an early stage of the proceedings he had privately begged Mr. Hinde to remove the impugned ornaments, with the exception of the confessional boxes, during the hearing of the suit. The remonstrance was unavailing, and during the whole progress of the litigation he maintained unbroken silence in public; the promoters of the suit had appealed to the law, and to the law he left them.

But he was sorely tried by the disregard of authority which seemed to be the rule of life among some of his

¹ The case in its various stages is fully reported in the Law Reports, 1901, P. 114; ib. 2 K.B. 141; 1902, 1 K.B. 816; ib. P. 221.

clergy ; the following is a sample alike of his difficulties and of the line adopted by him in dealing with them. A Hove incumbent writes to inform him that a certain 'Protestant agitator' has declared his intention of coming to Communion on Christmas Day, and if a wafer is offered him of throwing it at the officiating priest. What is he (the incumbent) to do ?

I have personally a great dislike to 'wafer' (replies the Bishop), as being something quite different from the unleavened bread used by our Blessed Lord Himself. And what I strongly advise you to do is, at once to substitute the purest wheaten bread for 'wafer' at your services of Holy Communion. Personally I so dislike 'wafer' that I should not attend a church where it was used. You are quite at liberty, if you like, to say that you make such a change at my direction.

The clergyman in his answer much regrets that it is impossible to act upon 'your Lordship's kindly expressed advice.' He considers that he is justified by the words of the rubric : he is bound to respect his own conscience and that of the regular worshippers at his church. The Bishop rejoins as follows :—

I am a little tired of the 'conscience' argument which I find invariably used by a Low or a High Churchman to cover his own practices, quite irrespective of the solemn obligations taken at his Ordination to obey his Bishop. The argument as to the value of 'shall' or 'shall suffice' is quite well known to me. This is a case in which things 'are diversely taken.' The Prayer Book, which you have solemnly promised to observe, prescribes that, in such cases, recourse shall be had to the Bishop, who shall 'take order.' Recourse has been had, and the order taken by me is my strong advice to you, which I repeat to-day, to use the best and purest wheaten bread at the service of Holy

Communion and to tell the people that you do so at my request. I have little doubt that such a change would be acceptable to all the reasonable persons in your congregation.

In the opening sentence of this letter the Bishop was probably alluding—at least the dates are capable of this interpretation—to a very disagreeable controversy in which he had been involved by the indiscretion, to give it the mildest word, of some of his clergy. In parts of his diocese, more especially in the Sussex watering places, there flourished, side by side with the extremes of ritual, a generous sprinkling of churches where the school of old-fashioned Evangelicals found services entirely to their taste. In many of them there was an evening celebration of the Holy Communion once a month, and the traditions of the pre-Tractarian age were faithfully maintained and perpetuated. Wilberforce held strong but not intolerant views on the subject of evening Communion. He had expressed disapproval of the practice in his first charge to the diocese of Newcastle¹; and in his primary visitation of the diocese of Chichester he had again spoken in clear and unmistakable language.²

I do not cease to deprecate evening Communions (he said), as an unwarranted departure from the whole of Church history and practice, from the time of St. Paul's letter to the Church at Corinth until quite recent days; and as being an unnecessary departure, in all cases where due facilities for attending the Service of the Holy Communion at other times are provided. Doubtless those were introduced with the best and highest motives, yet in many instances they are now

¹ *Supra*, p. 140.

² P. 57. This part of the charge, it should be noticed, was delivered in Hastings, where the churches in which evening Communion was celebrated were more numerous than in any other part of the diocese.

becoming very much the badge of a party. There can be no part of the whole of our Services where dissension and controversy are more to be deprecated, and by devout minds will be avoided, than that relating to the Sacraments. And for my own part I should not attempt to enforce a rule ; but I am bound to teach what it appears to me the Church teaches, and I would rather leave this subject to the enlightened sense of all clergy who are above the considerations of party and wish to act according to the mind of the Church. My own experience has been, that wherever an incumbent has replaced evening Communion by those at such an hour in the morning as may be suitable to those for whose convenience the evening Communion were intended, there such substitution has proved eminently successful, and has become very acceptable to the people themselves. I do not underrate the arguments by which the practice is commended, nor question the piety of those by whom it was commenced, nor the evident desire manifested that God's House may be filled, nor the clear appreciation of the value of Holy Communion shown by those who would provide this means for the fulfilling of our Lord's commands, and of receiving what He offers in the Holy Communion ; but this practice seems to me not in accord with the spirit and tone of our Services, nor with the ancient traditions of the Church.

Early in the year 1902, some four years after the delivery of this charge, one of his incumbents, the Rev. E. J. Sing, requested the Bishop's permission to introduce the practice of evening Communion into the parish of Salehurst for the benefit of some farm labourers. The Bishop in a short and friendly note declined ; it is difficult to imagine how anyone who had read the passage just quoted could imagine he would do otherwise.

I cannot sanction evening Communion (he wrote), believing them to be quite as much a breach of Church

order as the ceremonial use of incense, etc., but I feel sure you will try and find out what early morning hours might suit those of your parishioners. Eight A.M. is often very inconvenient, whereas six or seven A.M. is convenient, and I know you would not shrink from the trouble of this.

The letter on the face of it was a confidential communication between a Diocesan and one of his flock ; but much to the indignation of the writer it found its way into the columns of a local newspaper, from which it obtained a wide circulation in the London and provincial Press. A perfect tornado of abusive correspondence descended upon the head of the Bishop. Orange lodges fulminated ; the Protestant federations delivered a list of interrogatories ; clubmen from St. James's and Piccadilly aired their theology ; Ernest Wilberforce was accused of flying in the face of the Gospel narrative and claiming for himself a more than Papal infallibility. ' You are an arbitrary, arrogant, false prelate,' said one of his correspondents, ' and are stirring up strife in Israel. Men like you are undoing the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and rending the Church in pieces.' The clergy in whose churches the practice of evening Communion prevailed were up in arms ; and one of them challenged the Bishop to proceed against him in the Ecclesiastical Courts.

DEAR MR. J—— (wrote the Bishop in reply),— I am in no way responsible for my letter to Sing being published. It was not published by him but by one of those who seem to think that a Bishop may be treated in a manner outside the usual courtesy afforded to gentlemen and that his letters may be published without leave, and he himself addressed in a manner which would be employed to no one else. You are different, I am

glad to say, and tho' one may differ in many respects, you have always shown me courtesy and kindness. But I am beginning to think that every letter not specially intended for publication must be marked 'private.' As to evening Communion, I must refer you to my charge of 1898, p. 57. You will see there that I say 'I should not attempt to enforce a rule,' and this must be my reply to your suggestion as to becoming a 'defendant.' I do not think any form of prosecution by the Bishop the right method in matters of ritual excess or defect, or cognate matters. Doctrine or mode of life seem to me to stand on different grounds. I repeat that I shall be glad to see you here for a night or so to talk matters over.

My argument is roughly (he wrote to another clerical remonstrant) that the re-introduction of a custom which has been given up by the Church for hundreds of years ought to be by the authority of the Church, and not by that of private persons, whether this custom be that of evening Communion, on the one hand, or of the ceremonial use of incense on the other. *Per se* I have no great objection to either, tho' I think both have dangers to be guarded against; it is the want of authority for the change that I speak of; and I hardly see how an authoritative 'voice of the Church' can be had, till the clergy and laity sit together.

I cannot help being struck (he remarks in a later letter) with the great resemblance between the arguments you use and those constantly used to me by the extreme Ritualists whose ritual I am trying to diminish. They always urge primitive custom; the observances of the whole Church; no canon or ecclesiastical order directly forbidding; the silence of the Prayer Book; the right of every individual clergyman to do what he thinks right in the matter, &c., etc., and they always fall back on their conscience, which forbids them to give up a laudable custom of the Church.

A body of the clergy, however, insisted on treating the Bishop's private letter as a public manifesto and took concerted action. Ten incumbents from the rural deanery of Hastings signed a remonstrance to the Bishop. 'Feeling deeply,' so they said, 'the undeserved censure expressed in your Lordship's letter to the Vicar of Salehurst, in which you place evening Communion in the same category as the ceremonial use of incense—which latter has been authoritatively declared by the two Archbishops to be illegal,' they submitted their reasons for introducing or maintaining the practice of evening Communion in their church ; and concluded by earnestly entreating his Lordship 'to remove this censure, which we consider to be unjust and uncalled for.'

The tone of the memorial was unexceptionable, but before the Bishop had time to frame a reply he was astounded to read it in the columns of the *Hastings and St. Leonards Observer*, whither a copy had been despatched by one of the signatories.

Of newspaper controversy on sacred subjects, above all on such a subject as the celebration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Bishop had a perfect horror, and he had consistently refused to be drawn into any. The attempt to force his hand by publishing the memorial before he could possibly reply to it roused his indignation to the highest pitch. He wrote a strongly worded letter to the St. Leonards clergyman, by whom the memorial had been forwarded to him, complaining bitterly of the course that had been adopted, and absolutely declining any further communication with him on the subject. At the same time he wrote individually to the nine other incumbents, and discovered that this gentleman's action in publishing the memorial before a reply had been received was entirely on his own initiative, and to the

surprise and annoyance of the other signatories, who imagined that the exact converse had been decided upon at their meeting.

Do let me (wrote the Bishop to one of them ¹), as a much older man, give you, who may have a future before you, one friendly warning. Don't be too ready to sign any memorials or public protests. But if you think it right to sign, be very careful to make exceedingly *sure* what use is going to be made of the document. For when once you have signed, you are responsible both for the contents and for the use, however reprehensible, that the document may be put to.

In the spring of 1904, as the outcome of many debates in Parliament, and a prolonged agitation in the country, characterised too often by scenes of brawling and violence,² Mr. Balfour appointed a Royal Commission on the state of Ecclesiastical Discipline. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, now Lord St. Aldwyn, was the chairman, and the other members were the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Marquess of Northampton, the Lord Chief Justice (Lord Alverstone),³ the late Bishop of Oxford, Sir Francis Jeune, Sir John Kennaway, M.P., Mr. J. G. Talbot, M.P., Sir Samuel Hoare, M.P., Sir Edward Clarke, K.C., Sir Lewis Dibdin (Dean of Arches), the Rev. Edgar Charles Sumner Gibson (now Bishop of Gloucester), the Rev. Thomas Wortley Drury (now Bishop of Ripon), Mr. George Harwood, M.P., and Mr. G. W. Prothero. The full reference of the Commission was 'to inquire into the alleged prevalence of breaches or neglect of the law relating to the

¹ The Rev. H. Foster Pegg, Rector of St. Matthew's, Hastings.

² The elder Mr. Kensit died from injuries received in a Birkenhead street fight in October 1902.

³ The Chief Justice was appointed in lieu of Sir Francis Jeune, who died very early in the course of the inquiry, shortly after his elevation to the peerage as Lord St. Helier.

conduct of Divine Service in the Church of England, and to the ornaments and fittings of churches; and to consider the existing powers and procedure applicable to such irregularities.'

Evidence was given as to the existence of 'irregularities' in no fewer than 21 churches in the diocese of Chichester, and the replies returned to the Commissioners by those of the incumbents who accepted the invitation to answer the charges, though alleging that there was much bias on the part of the informers and much downright misrepresentation, admitted that the accounts given of the services were, in many respects, accurate.

On May 4 the Bishop appeared as a witness before the Commission. He had carefully prepared himself by going through the incriminated services, ceremonies, and acts, one by one, by checking the statements and inferences made in each individual instance, and by calling on the clergy for explanation.¹ His evidence drew down upon him the anger of the extreme Protestant party in the Church of England, and was the cause of more than one attack upon his memory in the Press after he had passed away.² It was inspired to no small extent by the methods which had been adopted by some of the witnesses who preceded him, by their looseness of statement, and by their determination to find illegality and superstition in everything of which they disapproved. Some of the incriminated clergy had been veritable thorns in his flesh, and had caused him deep sorrow. But they were his children in Christ, with whom he had striven and

¹ Some of the blunders made were ludicrous in the extreme, *e.g.* an old surplice had been described as 'a linen chasuble,' and a reredos had been taken for 'a Calvary.'

² The most elaborate of these was contained in a now defunct weekly journal, the *Layman*; see the issue of September 13, 1907,

prayed, and he had not yet abandoned the hope of bringing them back to obedience. In the 'short way with malignants' which was being pressed upon Parliament he saw the destruction of the last chance of restoring peace or unity to the Church. Nor could he persuade himself that any proposals of practical utility were likely to emerge from the mass of contradictory statements and clashing arguments which must necessarily form the groundwork of the Report. His own innermost feelings were those to which Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury gave expression in his charge of 1867, with regard to an earlier Royal Commission on a kindred subject.¹

I have more faith in another and simpler remedy—and that is the remedy of patience and charity. I would not question the loyalty of those Churchmen, be they what is called High, or be they what is called Low; but I would cling to the belief that continued fatherly kindness on the part of those in authority, and the careful abstinence on all sides from bearing false witness would do very much to lessen our difficulties, by constraining with the cords of love all, and especially the young, to deal with others, whether above them or below them, with consideration and sympathy, and to temper zeal for God's truth, even when purified from all dross of mere human passion, with the healing waters of charity.²

Much of his evidence was devoted to descriptions of services and acts given by previous witnesses which he had ascertained, on inquiry from the clergy concerned, to be so inaccurate or so prejudiced as to create a completely false impression, and he laid stress on the fact that in less than half a dozen out of 380 churches

¹ The first Ritual Commission.

² See *Walter Kerr Hamilton*, a sketch reprinted from the *Guardian* by H. P. Liddon, p. 128.

in the diocese were the practices extreme enough to come under his ban. And he urged strongly upon the Commissioners the need for the restoration of spiritual Courts in which the fatherly authority of the Bishops might be brought to bear with a reasonable prospect of success. He was cross-examined respectfully, if not very sympathetically, by the eminent lawyers on the Commission, but his absolute frankness bore him bravely through the ordeal. Indeed he carried the war into the enemy's country by his vigorous comments on the way in which the evidence, as regarded his own diocese, had been got together, and on the irresponsible volunteers whose activity, so he insisted, had largely tended to aggravate the situation.¹ He had come before the Commission to explain his own dealings with a problem the difficulties of which, in his opinion, were very imperfectly comprehended, and to speak a word for men of whose conduct he disapproved, but whose position and motives he had only too good reasons for understanding. In so doing his evidence passed the bounds of question and answer.

If you will allow me (he said, about half-way through his examination), I will just, as briefly as I can, point out some dangers which, I think, should be avoided in any future action which may be taken.

¹ 'In the case of the Diocese of Chichester the evidence has been given by two ladies, by one gentleman who is well known to us as the paid agent of a Protestant Society in Hastings, and by two gentlemen who are unknown to me, Messrs. Hogan from Tooting' (Bishop of Chichester evidence, Q. 18956). With this may be compared paragraph 4 of the Commissioners' Report, containing the invitation to the public to furnish evidence: 'In selecting the witnesses who will be asked to give evidence special consideration will be given to those who are or have been Church officers in any parish, or are qualified to speak from wide or special knowledge'; and adding that, 'The above announcement produced little response from Church officers or other persons having special connexion with particular churches; nor has any great portion of the evidence we have received come, to us from such persons.'

I hope you will not think that I am attempting to teach you, but I have been a Bishop since 1882, and I have had a great deal to do with ritual matters in one way and another. I know the difficulties and I do implore you to remember that here you are dealing with very tender things ; you are dealing with the consciences of men ; you are dealing with men, many of them the most earnest men possible. I do not for a moment defend all that they do, but they are men of the most earnest life, men who are absolutely devoted ; and these men have a very real belief in the Presence of our Blessed Lord according to His own promise ‘ where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst.’ They absolutely believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is there, and they want to make the most reverent and, as they think, the most fitting provision for such Presence. That is the leading motive in the mind of the greatest number of them ; there may be individuals who have some other motive, but I am speaking of the really earnest-minded men. They may be wrong or they may be right, but at any rate that is their belief, and I do think that this is especially a case in which force is no remedy. You must remember that every one of us who is now ordained has promised to give faithful diligence ‘ always so to minister the Doctrine and Sacraments and the Discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and Realm hath received the same, according to the Commandments of God.’ There are two factors there : one is the Church and the other is the Realm. If one of these factors is to act alone, you will at once have it said that you are trying to introduce new terms of communion. For instance, if Parliament merely acts alone and tries to bring coercive jurisdiction upon the Church, without the Church having taken her own proper share in originally suggesting to what legislation Parliament should give validity, you will find that you will range against you, I should say, two-thirds of the clergy of the Church of England. Not a single man who has any conception of the Church of God as

being a spiritual body will stand the Realm alone legislating for the Church of God ; and you may easily have a state of things in which you may have nearly two-thirds of the clergy of the Church of England, and the majority of the bench of Bishops in prison at the same time. Remember the end of all coercive legislation, after all, is prison ; you may turn a man out of his living, and he will go back again if he does not agree with you, and all that you can eventually do is to exercise the strong arm of the law. Or you may have, on the other side, such a demand for disestablishment in order to free the Church from what men may consider to be the undue action of the State or the Realm that you could not possibly resist it.

Here the Chairman interposed : ‘ Do you think that those dangers would be avoided if in any legislation which might be attempted Convocation were first consulted, and the decisions of Convocation were acted upon by Parliament ? ’

I was going to suggest that (replied the Bishop) ; I will come to that in one moment if you will allow me. May I just say for myself, that ritual, what is usually called ritual, extreme ritual, is no help to me personally whatever. I dislike it, and it would worry me in church ; and if there were two churches, one with extreme ritual, and another where things are done extremely reverently, I should always go to the latter. To me ritual is absolutely no help whatever, but I know there are a large number of people who think very differently and feel very differently from what I do ; very many to whom the language of the eye does undoubtedly assist the deepest devotions of the heart ; and we cannot turn our backs upon them. I know cases of the poorest, I know cases of the middle classes, and I know cases, and many of them, of what are called the upper or leisured classes, where that feeling is very strong ; and I want just to put it before you that

it is not mere child's play at all, that there are cases where devotion is enormously assisted and the power of prayer is immensely helped by just those things for which I have a distaste; but still there it is. And I do implore you to remember that over and over again it is not the incumbent who is responsible for introducing all this extreme ritual. I know cases and can mention them where the congregation demand it. I am speaking of the majority, or perhaps the leading members of the congregation, practically those who represent the congregation; they are always pushing the clergy on and on, saying 'Why do we not have this?' and 'Why cannot we have this?' and so on. I know cases where strong clergymen have said to me that even if they wished to obey me, and however much they might wish to obey me, they could not reduce what is called the ritual on account of the feelings and wishes of the congregation.¹

In some quarters, as was only to be expected, such evidence was deeply resented, in others it was regarded as manly, outspoken, and chivalrous. It was in this latter aspect, certainly, that it appeared to the clergy of his diocese. And the force and dignity with which he urged his plea for toleration had a marked effect upon the Commissioners, in one or two of whom a disposition towards 'Bishop-baiting' had been observable at certain stages of the inquiry. To Ernest Wilberforce himself it was enough to know that he had discharged his duty, and had shown to the world that his dealings with his clergy were no mere policy of *Laissez faire*, but the outcome of experience and deep-rooted conviction.

There were other questions besides those of ritual and discipline which caused him grave anxiety in the

¹ The Bishop's evidence will be found in vol. iii. of the Minutes of Evidence, pp. 169-180; Questions 18953-19154. The extract quoted in the text is from the answers to Questions 19041-19042.

administration of his diocese. Not the least of these were the Sisterhoods at East Grinstead and Hayward's Heath. He appreciated very highly the work they had done, and were doing, spiritual, philanthropic, and educational; but his knowledge of the human heart, to say nothing of the experience of history, taught him that if great danger was to be avoided, and if the full amount of good was to be extracted from their lives of self-denial, it was essential that the Sisters should work in harmony with their Bishop, and should submit themselves to his ruling and guidance. His predecessor had not seen his way to recognising St. Margaret's, East Grinstead, which had been founded by Dr. Neale in the days of Bishop Gilbert. Ernest Wilberforce had good reason in his own cathedral city to bless the labours of the Sisters in their noble mission of instruction and of rescue. He became their Visitor and granted his licence to their chaplain. But he made his support conditional upon their accepting his authority; he required them to discontinue the Service of Benediction and to obey him in the matter of the Archbishops' 'opinions' subject to such relaxations as he had sanctioned in a few of the advanced churches.¹ And he was most emphatic in reserving to himself, as Bishop of the diocese, the power of dispensation from the vows taken by the Sisters. He obtained the consent of the Mother Superior to a rule that the existence of this power should be explained to every Sister prior to her Profession, and that, after the vows had been taken at the Profession, it should be openly stated that they were subject to his dispensation. The undertakings thus entered into were loyally observed, and one of the last acts of his episcopate was to journey to East Grinstead

¹ *Vide supra*, pp. 264, 271.

in July 1907 and take part in the opening of the new schools.

His relations with the Mission Sisterhood of the Holy Cross were not so fortunate. Shortly after his entry into the diocese he had accepted the position of Visitor to their establishment at Hayward's Heath, the headquarters of the Community. But the refusal to accept his directions as to the use of incense, or to alter their statutes in accordance with his rules as to dispensation from vows, compelled him to resign this office in the year 1901. How strong were his feelings on the latter of these two questions appears abundantly in a letter to the Rev. W. M. Trevelyan, who succeeded him as Visitor, and who requested him, in May 1905, to put into writing his wishes as regards the question of vows and dispensations.

What I feel about the vow is this. Putting aside for the moment the right of an autonomous community to administer vows at all—a right which I hold to be more than doubtful, unless the Church or the Bishop give the necessary jurisdiction—putting this aside for the moment, I hold

(1) That no vow should be lifelong unless it be one found in the New Testament.

(2) That there is no dispensing power from such a vow possible, unless

(a) It is unmistakably laid down in the Statutes of the Community that the power of dispensation from the vow itself, and from all Ecclesiastical obligations attaching to the vow, is reserved to the Bishop of the Diocese, or the Visitor of the Community upon due cause being shown and proper inquiry held.

(b) At the time of the Profession of a Sister a statement is read in her hearing to the above effect. I myself take so high a view of vows as binding the

conscience that I cannot acquiesce in any vow not distinctly authorised in the New Testament, unless the dispensing power from such a vow is specifically laid down in the Statutes of the Community or is acknowledged by such a public declaration as I have mentioned above. I can have nothing to do with 'understandings' on such a subject. Of course you will kindly understand that I regard the right of an autonomous community to administer such vows at all as reserved for the present.

But of all the cases in which he was called upon to exercise his episcopal authority the one which caused him most pain and labour arose out of some charges brought against the clergy of St. Andrew's, Worthing. Shortly after holding a Confirmation there in November 1904 he received letters from several parents in the parish complaining that their children, boys and girls, had not been presented to him for that rite because they declined to go to private confession, and asking if this was done with his knowledge and approval. The Bishop replied that it was in direct contradiction to his wishes; that he entirely disapproved and that he would investigate the matter at once. His views indeed as to compulsory confession had been stated in most uncompromising language at the Chichester Diocesan Conference held in 1898.¹

I believe that though it might not be welcome, or even be disliked, much in the way of what is usually called 'ritual' would be tolerated but for the deadly evil of the attempt on the part of some, and these I still believe to be the few, to enforce a system of private confession. I presume we are not prepared to revert to what unquestionably was the primitive form, viz.—public confession of private sins. But while on the one hand nothing can overthrow the undoubted right given by the Church to a penitent burdened with the con-

¹ And see also p. 261, *supra*.

sciousness of sin and unable to make his peace with God, his undoubted right to resort to private confession, either informal and for spiritual counsel alone, or formal to be followed by private absolution, on the other we shall resist to the utmost any attempt to force private confession on all as a duty, or as necessary before confirmation or the Holy Communion, or as necessary for the highest exercise of spiritual life, or even as a counsel of perfection. Such an attempt, if at all general and unchecked, would rouse the English people to something akin to frenzy, and would end in a storm of just indignation, carrying with it unjust consequences. For such a storm would sweep over the land as would carry away a large portion of the true heritage of the English Church as well as the manifest abuse which gave birth to the tempest.

St. Andrew's was not one of the 'recalcitrant' churches, and it had accepted the Bishop's monition with regard to portable lights, incense, and reservation, but the Vicar, the Rev. H. Le Breton Girdlestone, who had only held the benefice for three or four years, was introducing a much 'higher' ritual than the congregation had been accustomed to : at the time of the Confirmation he was suffering from an attack of illness which had compelled him to leave the complete management of the parish in the hands of his curates, the Rev. H. L. Hart and the Rev. G. F. Finch. It was Mr. Hart who refused to allow the children to be confirmed. The Bishop communicated at once with the curates. Their first replies did not satisfy him, but on December 15 they both gave him an assurance in writing, that they did not require private confession and absolution as a necessary preliminary for presenting a candidate for Confirmation. On the 20th, however, the Bishop received a letter from Worthing, signed by Mr. Randall, enclosing a petition from parishioners and members

of the congregation of St. Andrew's, which referred to 'these children who were rejected at your recent visit, owing to their very proper refusal to comply with the conditions imposed by the clergy that they should attend confession.' The Bishop then wrote to Mr. Girdlestone, telling him of this communication and asking him as vicar of the parish for a further definite assurance 'that the children in question were not presented for Confirmation because the clergy were not satisfied as to their spiritual fitness for Confirmation at the time, and for no other reason,' this having been the explanation previously given him by Mr. Hart. Mr. Girdlestone gave the required assurance, which the Bishop at once transmitted to Mr. Randall. The latter replied, on January 10, 1905, 'We emphatically assert that our children were refused Confirmation by the St. Andrew's clergy simply and solely because they would not go to confession, and for absolutely no other reason, and we have conclusive evidence to that effect from the statements made by the Revs. Hart and Finch to the parents themselves.' This statement was published in the Press, and the curates pressed for an inquiry, which the Bishop granted. He appointed accordingly a Commission consisting of two clergy and three laymen, W. E. Hubbard, Esq., chairman, the Ven. Edward L. Elwes, Archdeacon of Chichester. W. B. F. Freeland, Esq., Maurice Goodman, Esq., and the Rev. Arthur Cocks. Of these the first three were nominated by the Bishop, Mr. Goodman, who was a solicitor, by the parents, and Mr. Cocks by the curates. Mr. Cocks, it should be added, was the Vicar of St. Bartholomew's, Brighton, one of the four churches which had been declared in contumacy by the Bishop. The Commissioners sat at the Town Hall, Worthing, on February 25,

in public ; the scope of their inquiry was confined strictly to the truth or untruth of the allegation contained in Mr. Randall's letter of January 10. The Commissioners unanimously reported that ' having duly heard and examined all persons desirous or willing to be heard or examined by us, we are of opinion that the allegations contained in the said letter in their literal meaning were not proved to our satisfaction, but that from the conversations which took place the parents had grounds for believing that such allegations were justified.'

Such a finding, evidently the result of a compromise, could be satisfactory to no one. It was tantamount to ' not guilty, but don't do it again,' and the Bishop felt compelled to take further action. A manual in use by the clergy at St. Andrew's, containing doctrine that was utterly repugnant to the teaching of the Church of England, was brought before his notice, and he felt compelled to call upon Mr. Hart to tender his resignation as curate. Earnest representations were received by him from Mr. Hart's friends in the parish begging him to reconsider his decision. On the other hand there came strong protests against Mr. Hart's teaching, and at least one categorical statement from a parent that the recent secession of his daughter to Rome was the direct outcome of Mr. Hart's influence. The vicar stood by his curate, and the situation seemed hopeless. The Bishop, however, made a final effort ; he induced Mr. Hart and Mr. Girdlestone to meet him once more in a private interview, and the result was communicated by him to the local Press in the following terms.

Mr. Hart solemnly assures me that he does not and will not require private Confession as a necessary preliminary to either Confirmation or Holy Communion,

or press it beyond the limits laid down in the Prayer Book. The Manual gravely objected to by me has been withdrawn, and a promise given that the Manual circulated in future shall be one approved by the Bishop; that the 'instructions' issued to candidates for Confirmation will in future be changed in certain important particulars; and Mr. Hart promises that in all his instructions on the Sacraments he will lay emphasis on the fact that there are 'two Sacraments only generally necessary to salvation.'

In these circumstances the Bishop was enabled to withdraw his invitation to Mr. Hart to resign. At the same interview he obtained from the Vicar an undertaking to discontinue the unauthorised services which had been introduced into the church, and for the future to submit all proposed variations in the conduct of public worship to his Diocesan. Obedience had at last been secured, and it seemed as though peace might now settle down on the distracted parish, but within a very few months Mr. Hart had been 'reconciled' to the Church of Rome, whither he was followed by his vicar, the latter having previously resigned the living. The Bishop was very painfully affected; it seemed as though he had spent himself in vain, and that he might just as well have cut the Gordian knot at the beginning by a sharp exercise of his episcopal authority. But to have done so would have been in complete contradiction to the policy consistently observed by him whether at Newcastle or Chichester. His strong sense of justice forbade him to condemn any man until he had heard both sides of the question; his belief in the efficacy of friendly argument made him reluctant to abandon hope until every expedient had been exhausted, and long practice in dealing with his clergy had taught him that courteous firmness, when joined with sympathy and a thorough

appreciation of the realities of parochial work would seldom fail to overcome the scruples of an over-sensitive conscience or the vagaries of an obstinate self-assurance. It may perhaps be urged that in this instance he stretched forbearance to the utmost ; but he obtained in the end a complete vindication of his authority as Father-in-God, and he could neither have foreseen nor prevented the melancholy sequel. What the ' Worthing worry ' cost him no one can realise who has not followed his correspondence day by day during those tedious months. Whatever step he took aroused the passions of one side or the other, often of both. While he was fiercely attacked for extending protection to ' Romanising Priests,' the latter were denouncing him for disloyalty to his clergy. Yet through the storm he kept his head, he kept his temper, and he kept his due sense of proportion. He was not one of those who are prone to turn the cheek to the smiter, but he could make allowance for men who were suffering from illness or from the strain of over-work, or from what they regarded as persecution. Impertinence was met by dignified rebuke, and his advice to one of the Worthing clergy, ' Do try to cultivate a hobby,' gives a glimpse of the broad common-sense which never left him in the times of sorest stress. But the stress was very sore ; it came upon him when his own health was beginning to fail, and it left marks upon him which were never effaced during the residue of his episcopate.

CHAPTER XIII

BISHOP OF CHICHESTER—1896—1907 (*continued*)

Chairmanship of the Church of England Temperance Society—The Bishop founds the Diocesan Board of Education—The Brighton Church Congress—Takes part in the Mission of Help to South Africa—His experiences—The impression created by him in Rhodesia—An unappreciated joke.

THE events recorded in the two preceding chapters were not allowed by the Bishop to interfere with the general administration of the diocese or with his activities in the cause of social reform. He had not been a full year at Chichester when he was chosen to be Chairman of the Church of England Temperance Society in succession to Archbishop Temple, who became President on the death of Archbishop Benson in October 1896. The circumstances of the election, which took place at the Autumnal Meeting held at Canterbury in December, are set out in the following letter from the late Canon Ellison, the Secretary.¹

When the resignation of the late Chairman had been placed in our hands I was requested by him to inform the Council of the steps that I had taken, in obedience to a

¹ The Rev. John Ellison, Canon Residentiary of Canterbury, was the founder of the Society, and it was he, so Sir Ernest Tritton writes, whose 'life and words and personal attraction led many of us in the early seventies to enlist in the ranks of the C.E.T.S.'

suggestion from him, to help to secure the right man as a successor; and with this view he authorised my submitting to the Council the 'qualifications,' a copy of which you have already seen. When they were read, it seemed likely that, to avoid all possibility of rushing an unfit man, a sub-committee might be appointed to go through and report upon the qualifications of promising persons. With a view to that it seemed only right that the qualifications on my paper should be gone through and voted upon *seriatim*. Before, however, this could be put to the vote, Dr. Ridgeway, the Chairman of the London Diocesan Board,¹ suggested that, probably, I had in my own mind the name of some one or more possible persons, and that it might dispense with the more tedious process of sub-committee meetings if, such being the case, I could make the name or names known at once. To this I saw no objection, having interpreted your letter as an intimation that though 'you could not give a definite answer until a definite offer had been made, yet there was nothing in the qualifications to interfere with your acceptance of the offer.' I at once, therefore, gave your name. It was received with acclamation from the Chairman downwards. It was followed by some corroborative evidence from three or four of the Council members, testifying from their own practical acquaintance to the entire safety of the proposal. It appeared to be the wish of the meeting to take the vote at once, and, the Chairman having put the question, the appointment was made without a single dissident. I will only add that I have heard of nothing but unmixed approval on all sides.

It was a thoroughly well-earned compliment, but the office brought with it an enormous accession of work and responsibility. The monthly meetings of the Executive, the two half-yearly meetings of the Council, one of them generally held in a distant diocese, were

¹ Now Bishop of Salisbury. *Vide supra*, p. 52 n.

only a part of the burden thrown upon him, and Wilberforce was not the man to disappoint expectations or to shirk a single one of his duties. By common consent he made an exemplary chairman, even when tried by the standard of his immediate predecessor. He brought to the work a natural gift for organisation, the faculty of swift decision, and the knack of managing men whether assembled in a crowded meeting or gathered round the green baize of the council chamber.

With a keen sense of humour (says a writer in the *Temperance Chronicle* ¹) he combined a business capacity and grasp of detail and gentle firmness which ensured that the meetings of the Executive were always, as they should be, good-tempered and strictly business-like, irrelevancy or any tendency towards acrimony being swiftly checked by a kindly word or two from the chair.

One of his characteristic traits is recorded in a letter to Mrs. Wilberforce from the Very Rev. H. Russell Wakefield, now Bishop of Birmingham, but at the date of writing Rector of St. Mary, Bryanston Square.

Whenever I arrived a little late he would beckon me up to sit near him, and he paid every attention to me that he would have bestowed upon a dignitary of the Church. It made one think he felt a personal interest in his less important fellow-workers. These little things are not forgotten. He struck me always as a man of the deepest convictions and yet the most unassuming humility.

He was an admirable Chairman (writes Sir Ernest Tritton, who, as Treasurer of the Society, enjoyed exceptional facilities for forming a judgment), courteous—alert—anxious to get all opinions—quick to grasp

¹ September 13, 1907.

every point, and ever desirous of leading the Committee to right decisions. Ours is not, perhaps, an easy Committee to preside over. We are not agreed on all points, especially on legislation, but the Bishop's chairmanship always made for peace, and during the eleven years in which he held that office he kept the Society wonderfully together and ever inspired us all by his zeal and earnestness, making us realise the duty and privilege of being engaged in temperance work for our Divine Master and His Church. There will always remain with me the memory of his charming personality and his eloquent efforts for the promotion of habits of temperance, for the reformation of the intemperate, and for the removal of the causes which lead to intemperance.

It may be added that his long-accustomed habits of hearty co-operation with other temperance bodies were especially valuable in promoting the extension of the Society's work, and in drawing together the forces arrayed to combat the national sin.

He presided over the Council for the first time in May 1897, and the words of the short address in which he acknowledged the hearty welcome with which he was greeted struck the note of his work as chairman.

I do very deeply feel that we have a necessity laid upon us not only to keep on with the work in which we have been engaged for so many years ; but also to try and make that work more strenuously felt than it is at present, though I hope you will not in any way think that I am saying anything discouraging to those to whom the work is entrusted. The work is a good and true one, but we cannot help feeling that there is still an enormous amount of work before us, still a very great deal of this vice to be overcome. There are a very large number of young men about, who are not beginning their lives on any definite principles. I myself always try at ordination times and whenever

I get an opportunity to put the work before the young men and ask them to consider whether they are not called upon to take up some definite work of this Society, and in this way get hold of the younger men and women.

The first year of the Bishop's chairmanship embraced the Diamond Jubilee celebrations; and the Church of England Temperance Society marked that memorable event by the presentation to Her Majesty Queen Victoria of an illuminated address, by a demonstration in the Church House, and by the putting forth of a special effort to increase the membership of the Society by means of a letter signed by the President and Chairman, and in some cases the Bishop of the diocese. In all these proceedings the Bishop naturally took a conspicuous part, and on him devolved the lion's share of the arrangements. In his own diocese he brought fresh life and vigour to the temperance movement, and on occasions of public rejoicing such as the Jubilee, the Coronation of King Edward, or the return of the troops from the South African War he issued public appeals to the inhabitants of Sussex not to mar the occasion by reckless indulgence in strong drink and above all to refrain from the detestable habit of 'treating' their friends and especially their poorer neighbours.

During his later years at Chichester the education question assumed an acute form. Bishop Wilberforce had recognised as fully as his Metropolitan the consequences of placing Church schools on the 'steep and slippery slope' of rate-aid, though he had not anticipated the depths of resentment excited by the Education Act of 1902. It was a matter of deep regret to him that this measure should be the cause of renewed estrangement between Churchmen and Nonconformists. The Passive Resistance demonstrations of which Brighton and others

of the seaside towns were the scene caused him the acutest distress, and made it increasingly difficult for him to continue to work in concert with his many Nonconformist friends. But he was resolved, in his own words, 'to maintain at all costs the right to give Church teaching to the children of the Church, to impart the whole dogmatic truth as taught by Christ and His Apostles ; and never to surrender the indefeasible right of parents to demand that their children shall be taught the truths they themselves profess.'¹ In his visitation address in November 1903 he spoke strongly on what he termed the organised conspiracy to defeat the Act or make it unworkable. He repudiated with indignation the attempt 'made, it seems mainly for political purposes, to identify the Church at large with some extreme doctrines to be found only in less than one per cent. of the schools, if found at all, and so to enlist the Protestant feeling of the country on the side of the opponents of the Act.' He had recognised as long ago as his Seaforth incumbency, the legitimate grievance of Nonconformist parents in those country districts where the only school is a Church school,² but it could be met easily, so he contended, by the appointment of a Nonconformist pupil teacher or assistant teacher,—according to the size of the school,—who could give scriptural instruction to such children of Nonconformist parents as might require it during the time that Church teaching was being given to the others. As Bishop of Newcastle he had entered his protest, in a passage I have already quoted, against 'State-made undenominational religion from which all distinctive teaching is eliminated, until

¹ St. Leonards Diocesan Conference, 1904. *Chichester Diocesan Calendar*, 1905, page 210.

² *Vide supra*, p. 36.

nothing remains in it whereby the tender susceptibilities of rival religious bodies or of competing sects can be offended.' ¹ This protest he now renewed in what was destined to be his last Episcopal charge.

What effect (he asked) is likely to be produced by such teaching? Is such emasculated doctrine likely to be possessed of much vitality or calculated to dominate and govern the unruly wills and passions of men; or to fit a man to combat and to conquer the many and sore temptations from the world, the flesh and the devil, that are certain to constantly assail him in his journey through life? Will it comfort him much in his sorrow, greatly support him in his loneliness, or give him real fortitude and consolation on his death-bed? What would St. Paul have thought of it? No, the Church of England will assert her right to teach the doctrines she believes in, fully and freely, in her own schools to her own children. There can be no sort of compromise offered or accepted; it is a matter of life and death for the Church.

But the Act required new machinery and new organisation on the part of Churchmen, and it still left it incumbent on them to put their hands in their purses for the maintenance of their existing school buildings, and for the erection of new ones, a very pressing question in the diocese of Chichester, where the urban population was increasing at a rate which few either realised or appreciated. Under the earlier Education Act of 1897 a Diocesan Association of Managers of Voluntary Schools had been called into existence for the purpose of advising in what proportion the new grant in aid should be distributed. The Association was made the nucleus of the new Diocesan Board of Education, in the formation of which the Bishop, as chairman, took the liveliest

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 193.

interest. This body, the success of which was mainly due, by common consent, to his constant supervision, was founded on a thoroughly representative basis. Its members were elected from the governing bodies of the secondary schools, from the head teachers of the elementary schools, and from the training colleges, while the Bishop, the Dean, and the Archdeacons constituted the *ex officio* element. Its main duty was to administer a common fund for the purpose of meeting the liabilities of managers in respect of repairs, alterations and improvements of elementary school buildings, and also a building fund for providing new school buildings. In addition to this it took over, soon after its establishment, the control and management of the diocesan inspection of elementary schools in religious subjects. No diocese, it may fairly be said, was more ready in adapting itself to the changes in the world of elementary education than that of Chichester.

I have more than once referred to Ernest Wilberforce's intense dislike of party spirit and partisanship in the Church. He held party politics in almost equal disfavour. His grandfather's fortunes had been linked, though in a spirit of considerable independence, with those of a series of Tory premiers. His father, after beginning life in the same fold, had become eventually a devoted adherent of Mr. Gladstone. It was to this statesman, as we have seen, that Ernest Wilberforce owed both the living of Seaforth and the see of Newcastle. He was generally regarded, and indeed he regarded himself, as a Liberal of the Whig school, but he owned no allegiance to Parliamentary Liberalism ; his friends were drawn impartially from either camp, and it was by a Conservative Prime Minister that he was translated to Chichester. Though a strong Unionist, he was one of

those who abstained from voting when the Home Rule Bill of 1893 was rejected by the House of Lords, and it was only when secular issues had an immediate bearing upon the spiritual life of the nation or upon social wellbeing that he would allow himself to be involved in the controversies of the day. The Education Bill of 1902 was one of these. Another was Disestablishment. During his northern Episcopate he had been in the midst of a hardy Radicalism which made Disestablishment and Disendowment an integral part of its creed, and many of his friends and fellow-workers were members of the Liberation Society.¹ But he had never concealed his sense of the impolicy of Disestablishment and the injustice of Disendowment. And when, as in the years 1893-5, the attack against the Welsh dioceses was being pushed forward with vigour by the Government of the day he was outspoken in his protests. During his last years at Chichester it was obvious that the assault would be renewed at no distant date and would not be confined to the Church in Wales; and he took a leading part in organising the branches of the Church Defence Society throughout his diocese.

To this subject he devoted a striking passage at the end of his visitation charge in November 1903.

You can never disestablish the Church of England (he said), do what you will. Never. I do not mean that Parliament has not the power to take away Endowments partially or wholly, and turn the Church out into the world, stripped of her possessions, naked and bare, self-governing and autonomous. That power exists, though all justice might be lacking in its exercise. But do what you may, you can never disestablish the Church of England from the hearts and the homes and the lives

¹ *E.g.* the late Dr. Spence Watson, the leader of Northumbrian Liberalism.

of the people of England. You can never draw a wet sponge over England's past, never unwind the threads of the Church's life, which since Apostolic days have wound closer and ever nearer into the life, the best life, of this nation. No other body exists that could replace her.

This charge, full of hope and encouragement, and breathing the spirit of ripe experience, was the last which Wilberforce was destined to deliver. He held that in these days when a Bishop is in constant communication with all parts of his diocese personally, as well as through the medium of the Archdeacons and Rural Deans, and when, thanks to modern methods of locomotion, he can make his way with tolerable ease and rapidity to each individual parish, the formal act of visitation was less frequently called for. Had he lived he was to have held the next in the winter of 1907.

In October 1901 the Church Congress was held at Brighton; by a pleasant coincidence it had met the year previous at Newcastle. Though Brighton is not far from Chichester as the crow flies, the Bishop made his headquarters in the Marine Parade, and during the week for which the Congress lasted he and Mrs. Wilberforce kept open house for friends and strangers alike. This was not the first occasion on which the famous Sussex watering place had been selected for the honour: the Brighton Congress of 1874, coming within a few months of the passing of the Public Worship Regulation Act, had been marked by a succession of stormy scenes, and a display of heat and personalities which made the proceedings more vivacious than edifying. In 1901 the contrast was complete; good manners and good temper were scrupulously observed in debate, and though 'Ecclesiastical Disorder' was scarcely a less burning

question than in 1874, a far better spirit of understanding had grown up between the Bishops and their clergy. The audience crowded under the dome at Brighton knew something, though only a part, of the long and patient endeavours of the Bishop of Chichester to enforce discipline without breaking up congregations and without driving parish clergy into defiance. He met with an enthusiastic reception as he came forward to deliver the Presidential address¹; and from the start to finish, whenever he occupied the chair he had the meeting completely in his hands. The tone of the whole Congress was one of goodwill. The Mayor of Brighton that year was a strong Wesleyan, but he had co-operated heartily in the arrangements for the reception of the Congress, and in the deputation of prominent Nonconformists who extended a public and friendly greeting were the President of the 'Federation of Evangelical Free Churches' of Sussex and the Rev. R. J. Campbell of the City Temple. The Bishop in acknowledging it spoke warmly and sympathetically of the services which Nonconformity had rendered to the common cause which all Christian men had at heart.

There are many matters (he said) on which we are able to work together, and I myself always welcome such opportunities. But we do not agree in regard to many questions of doctrine, and it would therefore be hollow and unreal for us to join together in acts of worship when we are not agreed on first principles. It will be better for us to acknowledge honestly that we do not agree than to quarrel over those points of

¹ It had been composed in Norway. 'That Congress address,' he wrote to his wife, 'oh how I hate it. Yet it has to be done somehow, even if amid most incongruous scenes and thoughts; I hope I shan't by mistake put in "Anders" (his Norwegian gilly) instead of "my Brethren of the Clergy and Laity," or speak of salmon pools instead of parishes!!!'

disagreement, but rather to go out and do our work to the very best of the power that God gives us, and try to prove that we are right by the success with which God may crown our efforts. We may be parted in matters of doctrine ; we may be one in many matters pertaining to the well-being of this nation. You, and I, Mr. Lane,¹ have stood together on this platform before now, and I trust that we may stand together again. On all matters of social advancement, of temporal well-being, all matters that have to do with purity and temperance we may work together shoulder to shoulder ; and I, as a Bishop of the Church of God, am thankful whenever we gather into any such movement the strength and the organisation of Nonconformists.

In his inaugural address the Bishop seized the opportunity of pleading the cause of the poorer clergy, and also of entering his protest against the spirit of intolerance which 'sought to exclude from the Church certain earnest men who appear either extravagant or wanting in their presentment of the faith.' Laudably concise, it was inspired by a loftiness of tone and a noble idealism which started the Congress on a plane from which it never deviated. Of all the meetings, sectional and general, at which the Bishop presided, the one which he most enjoyed, the one at which he could really 'let himself go,' was the gathering of working-men assembled in the Corn Exchange on the evening of the last day of the Congress. It was his own peculiar sphere : he had the secret of direct unadorned speech which goes to the heart of a popular audience and he knew how to enlist their sympathies and appeal directly to the better and most unselfish elements in each individual hearer. The Boer War was still in progress,

¹ The Rev. S. B. Lane, President of the Brighton and Hove 'Free Church Council.'

and the most sanguine were unable to fix a time limit for the stubborn resistance in the Transvaal and Free State : it lent itself as an inevitable but most fruitful source of illustration.

My firm belief (said the Bishop) is this, that if ever this great country of England is to be really regenerated—I mean by that, if ever the tide of intemperance, lust, vice, injustice, and evil feeling between man and man is to be rolled back—it must be by the manhood of England rising to the occasion ; and for that men must have pure and clean hands and strong aims, and they must put those aims and resolutions to work, so that the whole life of England may be lifted up, and the womanhood of England, often despised and trodden down in the very mire of the streets, may be lifted up by the strong true manhood of England. It can be done. Look at our own soldiers out in South Africa, your sons and mine, your brothers and mine, for my boy went out as a trooper,¹ and was preserved by the goodness of Almighty God, after being desperately wounded—and what have these men done ? I do not want to speak to you now of their valour—that is unquestioned ; but I want to point out to you that this war has brought out all the deepest, the tenderest, and the manliest part of them. Probably it has been partly because they have been deprived of two of the great temptations that beset the lives of men—women and drink : and please God, when they come home we shall not tempt them to drink—please God, when they come home we shall see some rising of the spirit of national manhood to do what it can to clear the streets and the public ways of those temptations to evil, of that army of fallen temptresses, themselves once betrayed, without whom many and many a young man would never have crossed that rubicon of sin, after crossing which the road down is so terribly easy. And remember that many a man who here in England seemed so selfish and careless,

¹ *Vide infra.*

has many a time, when starving himself, given the little bit of ration he had to another. All such splendid self-abnegation has come out under the stress and strain of war: why should it not come out while they are at home in England, under the energy and power of the Holy Ghost? It can be done.

In the spring of 1904 the Bishop formed one of the Mission of Help sent out from the Church at home to the Church of South Africa. The Transvaal and what had been the Orange Free State, as well as the northern parts of Cape Colony, were still war-scarred. Two years and a half of campaigning had reduced large tracts of the country to a desert, had utterly dislocated Church life, and envenomed the relations between former friends and neighbours, once more at peace, but with a load of bitter memories in their hearts. It was felt that a visit from a band of representative English clergy would not only help to build up the Church in Africa, but would prove fruitful in awakening the population of the old country to its duties and responsibilities in the territories so recently added to the Empire. The idea owed its inception to Bishop Wilkinson, then of St. Andrews, and Primus of the Scottish Church, who had travelled widely in British South Africa during the two previous years, had surveyed the ground, and prepared a welcome for the missionaries, and had raised in England and Scotland a sum of £5000 to defray the necessary expenses.¹ The Missioners, thirty-six in number, were carefully selected; and they included some of the best-known names in the Church of England; besides the Bishop of Chichester there were the present Bishop of Southwell,² then Bishop of Burnley, the late Bishop of

¹ See Canon A. J. Mason's *Life of Bishop Wilkinson*, ii. pp. 258-321.

² The Right Rev. Edwyn Hoskyns.

Gibraltar,¹ who has so recently passed away, the Rev. E. A. Stuart, now Canon of Canterbury, the Rev. M. C. Bickersteth of the Community of the Resurrection, and the Rev. P. N. Waggett of the Society of St. John the Evangelist. Ernest Wilberforce had visited South Africa long years before,² but a South Africa which had been changed out of all recognition. To all intents and purposes he was journeying to an unknown country, and there was a chance of adventure with the certainty of hard work and fatigue which gave the greater zest to the expedition. His friend, Bishop Richardson, formerly Bishop of Zanzibar, arranged to carry on his episcopal work at home, and he started for the Cape on April 30 on the S.S. *Briton*. At his special desire the following Collect was used daily in the diocese :—

O Lord, from Whom alone cometh our hearty desire to bless with service of peace and love the land long vexed by war ; prosper, we pray Thee, with Thy grace and presence the mission of help to the Church in South Africa ; and grant that all who go forth in Thy Name on its behalf may labour effectually in the power of the Holy Ghost, to the conversion of souls, the perfecting in righteousness of Thy faithful people, and the furtherance of Thy eternal purpose ; to Thy Glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The sea was always the best of tonics to Ernest Wilberforce. He had been terribly fagged and jaded, but a very few hours on the steamer put fresh life into him. My friend Mr. Charles Boyd, C.M.G., who was a fellow-passenger on the *Briton*, has told me how charming a companion he made himself to all on board, and how completely he revolutionised the notions of those who associated the English episcopate exclusively with

¹ The Right Rev. W. E. W. Collins.

² *Vide supra*, p. 19.

lawn sleeves and gaiters. He landed at Cape Town on May 17 and proceeded up country without more than a few hours' delay. His ultimate goal was Rhodesia, then just emerging from the pioneer stage, and in a condition of acute depression caused partly by the reaction after the 'boom' and partly by indifferent administration; but three or four weeks were devoted to Pretoria and the scattered parishes of the Transvaal. He reached Pretoria on May 20, after a long and tedious train journey, made interesting, however, by the battle scenes through which the railway passed. Some of his fellow-travellers had taken part in the great struggle, and they pointed out to him the ridge, a few miles away from the line, where his son had been dangerously wounded. A special compartment had been reserved for him, but on returning in the evening from the dining car he found that seven Boers had got in at Springfontein, and had established themselves in a carriage constructed to accommodate four passengers.

They were going on to Bloemfontein, where we were not due till 10.30. I opened the window, hoping to drive them out, but they stuck, so I offered them cigarettes, showed them radium, which they had never heard of, and, when they were all in good humour, I appealed to the best looking and told him I wanted to go to bed and couldn't go, for decency's sake, while they were there; he kindly said he would see if there was room anywhere else, and finally got them all into the dining compartment, one brute, however, causing him much trouble.

It was a foretaste of discomforts unavoidable in a country slowly struggling back to civilisation; and the condition of pioneer work in South Africa made heavy demands on the physical strength of a man in his sixty-fifth year. The dust, the jolting in country carts,

the uncertain food, the extraordinary changes of temperature, the awful cold of the early mornings, when he was called up in the dark either for a service in Church or to make a forced march, were all cheerfully borne by the Bishop ; and they were matched on the other hand by the glorious sunshine and the brilliant starlit skies. The beasts and birds and flowers were a never-ending delight to him, and he was able to gratify his curiosity by going down some of the great mines of the Rand, and receiving initiation into the processes of gold extracting and cyanidising. And to one of his direct unconventional nature it was a welcome experience to find himself on terms of easy equality with all those varying types of humanity which make up Colonial life, and which at home regard the clergy as a caste apart. Educated laymen opened their hearts to him on matters which in England are rarely confided to Bishops by chance acquaintances. In the course of his journeying he was brought into contact with every phase of South African society, from luxurious quarters among the gold magnates to up-country stores ; and while the demands on his time for services in tents and school-rooms and assembly rooms, often amid the most primitive surroundings, were unceasing, he was gratified by ever-growing congregations of strong-faced men. ‘ It is men,’ he wrote, ‘ young men everywhere ; the *want* of the mission is the opportunity of getting into more personal contact with individuals ; there is no place to see anyone—no vestry, and they are all very shy of one another.’ But even where personal contact was not established Ernest Wilberforce could reach the hearts and consciences of his hearers.

DEAR MR. HAWKER (wrote a young trooper in the South African Constabulary),—I should be very glad

if you would thank the Bishop of Chichester for his encouraging words during the Mission, especially in our Camp on Wednesday. You know the difficulties of a barrack-room life, and the services this week have been a great help to some of us.

You have not come in vain, my Lord (says another letter), and before you leave Heidelberg I wish to thank you for the help and comfort I have obtained from your addresses, and may I ask your Lordship if you can make it convenient when you are going from Roycedale to the Nigel to call at the Nigel Pumping Station, which you will pass, and visit Mrs. Duffy. She is over eighty years of age, very infirm, and I am afraid will not be able to get to the Nigel, and I feel sure that a few words spoken by you would be a comfort to her until her life's end.

During those weeks Ernest Wilberforce was a missionary in the truest sense of the word ; the stately accompaniments which still hedge in an English Bishop were cast to the winds ; he took the various services himself with such aid as the local clergy could afford him ; he preached and prayed and administered the sacraments to the scattered congregations with the same simplicity that had marked him in his earliest days as a parish priest, and, save for the absence from his dear ones at home, he was never happier. After conducting a ten days' mission at Boksberg and another of the same length at Heidelberg, he made his way back to Pretoria. Then came a flying visit to Mafeking and a long journey in the blinding dust to Buluwayo. He visited Hartley and Salisbury and the Penhalonga Mission Station near Umtate, where he preached to the native boys and girls through an interpreter. The journey to Umtate was of a breakneck character, driven as he was in a ' spider ' with two wild Australian

horses and a driver 'up to his teeth in whiskey.' From Salisbury he made his way back to Buluwayo and then, after an expedition to the great Falls of the Zambesi, he set his face for England.

Capetown was reached on July 23, and he was back in his own diocese on August 13. A crowded thanksgiving service in St. Paul's Cathedral on November 15 marked the close of a memorable episode in the missionary annals of the Church of England.

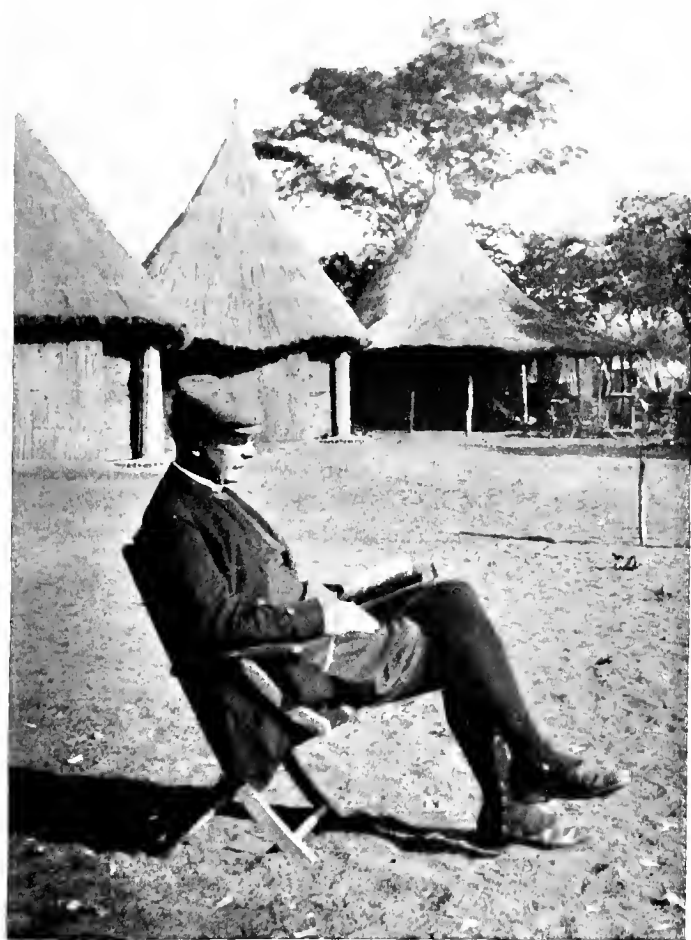
Some idea of his everyday life on the Mission and his impressions of South Africa will be conveyed by the following extracts from one of his letters to Mrs. Wilberforce. It describes a flying visit to Mafeking, part pilgrimage, part holiday: his experiences on the road may not seem remarkable to the hardened traveller, but they were certainly a novel phase in the everyday life of an English Diocesan Bishop.

Mafeking, *June 22, 1904.*

MY DEAREST,

Here I am, after my trek overland for 186 miles, which has given me a wonderful insight into a great part of this extraordinary country, and has enabled me to see more of the people living in it, and to experience their great hospitality and kindness. I am sitting on the stoep of the Parson's house here, with Mr. Day, who was under Jacob at Portsea, and has married a very pleasant wife from Derbyshire. The sun is out hot, a cold wind is blowing, and a lovely lizard has just come out to keep me company: a great green creeper shelters me a little, and it is just 12. Day and I have been for a turn, and by-and-by we are going to see the points we used to read about, 'Game Tree Hill,' etc.

Now I will take up my parable from where I left off, for unfortunately I missed the English mail at Pretoria and can hear nothing from home till I reach



THE BISHOP ON THE VELDT.

Buluwayo on Saturday afternoon. On Friday last I preached at the Cathedral, after a terrible day of tossing in a motor car, as I think I told you, with Herbert¹ and the Bishop of Pretoria, on our visit to the 'Premier' diamond mine. The poor Bishop was so tired by it that he retired early to bed, where I saw him for a moment before leaving on Saturday.

Well, on Saturday morning at 6.30 I started in a Cape cart with my luggage, 6 mules and 2 drivers. It *was* cold; I had on my thickest winter coat, cardigan jacket and your rug over my knees and shivered! but by 12 I was sitting baking in my shirt sleeves. I shall long remember the knocking about I got that day; it was by far the roughest and worst of the four, and when at last I got to Rustenberg, to Kemball Cook, the Resident Magistrate, I told him I really didn't know whether I was on my head or my heels; and when I went to bed, the bed jolted and jumped and chucked me about for a long time. After about 3 hours we passed through the ruts, and got into a lovely country of trees and water, but hardly an inhabitant yet. Such views! Of course signs of forts and blockhouses, etc., on every ridge. We went 23 miles to Crocodile River, where we outspanned, and I got some tea and eggs and had a walk. The river is lovely, full of crocodiles and snakes everywhere, but I couldn't find one. At 1 p.m. we got to Volkuteskop, where we exchanged our mules for a much stronger team, and I got some tea and biscuits and bought lovely oranges off the trees. Then on to Sterkstroom by 3.5, where no food obtainable. Mr. Kemball Cook had that day got into his new house, far up at the foot of the hills, almost unfurnished and full of echoes. After a wash we had food. This country reminds me of West America in one way, viz. that wash as you will, you 'come off' on the towels, after being long in the dust. I revived after food and Boer tobacco, and we had such a crack. K. Cook was under Temple at Rugby and worshipped him.

¹ Now Lt.-Col. H. W. Wilberforce, 2nd Dragoon Guards, son of Archdeacon Basil Wilberforce.

I had to obey Glyn's orders, and travel on the Sunday, which I do not like ; so on Sunday morning I was off about 7 : we had a cold cloudy day with a strong East wind till quite 3 P.M., when the sun came out. Rustenberg is lovely with huts just behind, with waterfalls and precipices and kopjes—plenty of baboons and game in the hills. We journeyed through a lovely country at the foot of the great Magaliesberg Mountains, and rose to the 'nek,' or saddle, to cross. There I was overtaken by Mr. McDonald, a large farmer, who took me on in his American 'spider' and two gees : and I was thankful to be out of the Cape cart during the terribly rough descent of the mountains. He had been out in the war, and knew the country well, and showed me the lonely graves of 55 of our men killed under Kekewich at the fight at Selous River—and, further on, the great heap of bones where the Australian Bushmen's horses were caught and shot by the Boers at the Koster River fight. We got to his house (rebuilt since the war) and were welcomed by his large handsome Dutch wife, a niece of General De la Rey, and at 12.30 sat down to breakfast, a most welcome meal by that time ! Then over the farm and the tobacco fields. Then off again in the Cape cart and after some hours came to Vlakfontein, or Elands River, where Col. Hore was surrounded for 12 days by the Boers ; I saw the trenches and 'dug-outs.' There was a 'store' there with beds, but I didn't like the looks of either, so we went on 6 miles to a lonely store and farm kept by a Mr. Lee and his wife : they were very kind : took me in, gave me what food they had, and a bedroom in their one-storey house of brick and corrugated iron. Eventually I got warm by piling on the bed all I could lay hands on : we had very heavy rain that night for an hour, most unusual, they said. We had great talks about the war, and as to a large leopard (tiger they called it) which had carried off animals and was to be hunted next day—*how* I longed to be able to stay and join ! Monday morning I was off about 7. I passed through a lovely country and reached the Marico River, where

I could get tea and eggs at a store kept by a young fellow named Dyson whose father was English—he fought against us to the last. Marico River is lovely, but malaria breeds all down the valley, crocodiles in plenty, and the snakes terribly plentiful. Some day the river will be opened up, and the bush cut, and the animals and malaria will vanish. Dyson is going to erect a large hotel, and when the railway connects Pretoria and Mafeking, Marico will be a popular place—such fruit and oranges and tobacco, etc. We got to Vaalkop about 1.15, and I tried to get some coffee, and in vain for a long time. An old Dutch vrow, living in a splendid grove of oranges, who couldn't speak any more English than I can Dutch, positively refused to have anything to do with me; but I saw a younger woman with a child in her arms and made love to the child, and let it hear my 'truthful Tommy'¹ talk. I was soon invited into the house, and offered a place at their mid-day meal, and bought such splendid oranges from the tree, and wished I could give *you* some. The lemon trees were a perfect sight, and great shaddocks were growing there too. We got to Zeerust soon after 4, and I went, as directed, to the Resident Magistrate's (Mr. Levy), a most interesting man who has been through the Zulu as well as the Boer wars. About 7 we had food, and then the parson and a fine young Australian, Lieut. Macfarlane, and Capt. Fowler, both of the S.A.C., came in and there was much smoke and talk; and I heard to my dismay that the Cape Town Frontier had been closed, by telegram from Pretoria, to all animals since I left on Saturday owing to the cattle and horse plague, and there would be trouble on the border, as Mafeking is in Cape Colony still. However we telegraphed back for a Cape cart to come to the border and meet me, and Lieut. Macfarlane offered to come and see me through. On Tuesday we sent off the Cape cart and my luggage before 7, and started in Macfarlane's spider at 9. We reached the border at 3,

¹ His repeater watch.

and as I had Macfarlane with me there was no difficulty. They have already erected an immensely long barrier of barbed wire, and the only gate is guarded—many wagons were drawn up on the Transvaal side, unable to cross, many loaded simply with oranges. We transferred my baggage and I got here at 4. I was ordered to go to Major Panzera's, the native Commissioner, who was fighting here all through the siege, but found he had been sent for to Kimberley to meet Lord Milner ; and his wife and daughter had arranged for Day to take me on, so I came on here, and was glad to wash and have a cup of tea and a stroll with Day till it was dark. I cannot understand why the Boers wanted to take this place, and, if they did, why they didn't walk in, for there seems nothing to stop them on this level plain. . . . I confess that Mafeking is most disappointing : if only I had those two days in some of the lovely country and grand hills I have passed through, I could have explored with pleasure ; however the enforced rest is good, for I am really tired with all the knocking about I have had. . . . (June 23) I am to be up at 5 A.M. to-morrow and take the train for Buluwayo at 6.

Now goodbye, my own darling wife : how I long to see you again and hear your voice.

Ever your most loving husband,
ERNEST R. CICESTR.

An interesting description of the light in which their visitor presented himself to the Rhodesian has been kindly supplied to me by the Right Reverend F. H. Beaven, who at the time of the Mission was Archdeacon of Matabeleland, but is to-day the Bishop of Mashonaland. He had been formerly curate of St. Martin's, Brighton, and, though they were previously unacquainted with each other, he soon established a hearty and lasting friendship with Ernest Wilberforce, whom he accompanied to Buluwayo. They had reached

that place on Saturday June 25, and the Bishop preached twice the following day in the school church.

At the evening service the congregation was the largest ever known in Buluwayo, and the Bishop preached a splendid sermon on religion in daily life. In the afternoon he addressed a large gathering of railway men at the Railway Institute close to the station and visited several of the officials living close by. From the moment of his arrival in Rhodesia he seemed to win all hearts; as a well-known layman said, 'He is such a man, and so human.' While in Buluwayo the Bishop paid several visits to the Club, lunched and dined there, and had long chats with all sorts and conditions of men, of all shades of opinion; everyone seemed to take to him, in fact he won the confidence of the men who represent a high standard of English feeling. The Bishop seemed very struck with the warmth of this reception and alluded to it many times. He was inundated with invitations, and one day he was driven out to the Khami ruins, about forty miles from the town, where we spent a most enjoyable and profitable day. These ancient ruins stretch at intervals right across Southern Rhodesia, and were erected for the protection of those engaged in the gold industry—the Bishop roamed about the Khami ruins the whole day, and was keenly interested in their history, and when wandering in the Penhalonga Valley, Mashonaland, a week or two later he found to his great delight some crucibles, which he took home. Short visits were also paid to Gwelo, which is 100 miles north of Buluwayo, and Hartley, where a Confirmation was held. A Sunday was spent at Salisbury, and the Bishop preached twice in the Pro-Cathedral. From Salisbury he journeyed to Umtali (170 miles) and from there he visited our thriving native Industrial Mission of St. Augustine, Penhalonga, under the wise and energetic Principalship of Canon Etheridge. At each of these places the Bishop received a very hearty welcome,

and on his return to Buluwayo he paid a visit with me to the Victoria Falls. The line was just opened, and the journey of 300 miles was somewhat tedious—but from beginning to end was full of interest and joy, the Bishop's spirits being quite boyish. Needless to say the wonderful Victoria Falls impressed him tremendously. Day by day he wandered on the banks of the glorious Zambesi, went through the rain forest, down the palm grove—visited the Falls by moonlight, and, it being low water, we were able to spend one day on Livingstone Island, which is on the very lip of the Falls, from which the view of the mighty rushing cataract is indescribable and incomparable. This is the island that Livingstone landed on when he first came down the river and discovered the Falls in November 1855. Having explored the island we crept to the edge of the bank, and peered down with awe into the large rent which had been made from bank to bank of the Zambesi; and the Bishop having gazed for some time in silence into this gorge, nearly 400 feet, put his hand on my shoulder, and said 'God—God—God.'

While at the Falls the Bishop took service on the Sunday morning at the Hotel, and in the afternoon confirmed a man who came over on purpose from the newly formed township of Livingstone. Truly it was a memorable 'laying on of hands.' The little mud hut, four witnesses besides the candidate, all so simple, so quiet, close to the mighty water whose churning can be heard for miles away. I shall never forget the Bishop at that service; the true man seemed to come out, and his address, so fatherly, so suitable to the occasion, will never be forgotten by those few privileged to be there. Much more could be said on the visit of the Bishop of Chichester in connection with the Mission of Help, but there is no doubt that Rhodesia has good cause to remember him with gratitude; we loved him, he was a great Christian, a real friend, a lover of God and man.

Bishop Gaul, then Bishop of Mashonaland, tells me that the natives were much interested in knowing that

it was Wilberforce's grandfather who had gained for *their* grandfathers and themselves the boon of freedom from slavery, and he adds that the visit to the Penhanga Mission above referred to was the source of the greatest comfort and joy to the Brethren of the Community, with whom Ernest Wilberforce left a substantial offering towards their establishment. On his return to England he used to point to the educational and industrial work carried on there, and its steady growth and self-extension, as a complete answer to certain current objections against African Missions. As might have been expected, he had many stories to tell of life at the outposts of Christian civilisation. A favourite anecdote, picked up on the spot, and having the hall-mark of *ben trovato*, was to the effect that the Bishop of Mashonaland, coming suddenly upon a man-eating lion, proceeded to read the Thirty-Nine Articles to him. Unhappily this traveller's tale got into print, and he received letters from all parts of England, inquiring if he meant to throw discredit and contempt on the Church and its formularies. With smiling complaint that some people were born without the slightest sense of humour and that it was no use talking to them, he was compelled to explain to an Eastbourne audience that he had been betrayed into a joke.

CHAPTER XIV

LAST DAYS—1900-1907

The Palace at Chichester—Family joys and sorrows—Quiet days for the wives of the clergy—The burden of correspondence—Serious illness—A clerical round robin—Death of Bishop Lloyd—Wilberforce's last Sunday in his own diocese—Last visit to Norway—Illness on board ship—Death at Bembridge—The funeral service—Some appreciations—The Newcastle memorial—A wise Master-Builder.

No picture of the Bishop's later years would be complete without a glimpse at the home in which they were spent. Chichester is one of those fortunate sees which have escaped the embarrassing heritage that weighs upon Durham and Winchester, upon Worcester and Carlisle. The Palace stands under the shadow of the Cathedral : its beautiful old-world garden reaches up to the city wall, and a venerable stone archway in the main street opens into Canon Lane, through which, between quaint and picturesque buildings, is the main approach. The house itself is a happy combination of modern taste and historical associations. The more ancient parts of the Palace are in excellent preservation ; the arched Norman doorway and the Tudor ceiling, the mullioned windows and the long corridor lend themselves to our modern notions of comfort and convenience. The reception rooms are of ample proportions ; and the situation of the Palace in the heart of the town brought the Bishop and Mrs. Wilberforce into friendly contact with the

Cathedral clergy and with the citizens at large, who found them prompt and assiduous in every good work and neighbourly office. The proximity to the station made some amends for the shortcomings of the railway service, and there was no Westgate Hill ¹ up which to toil.

It might seem ungracious to compare the amenities of the Palace at Chichester with those of Benwell Tower ; but if the garden and the smokeless skies and the soft Sussex air are thrown into the scale, there can be small doubt as to the direction in which the balance would incline. During the Pan-Anglican Conference of 1898 the Bishop of Texas, the Right Rev. G. H. Kinsolving, was Wilberforce's guest for some happy summer days. 'Well,' was his remark during the course of the visit, 'if a man can have this *and* heaven, I guess he's pretty well fixed.'²

Here the family grew up round their father and mother—three girls and three boys. Frequent allusion has been made in these pages to the Bishop's devotion to his children. They helped, especially the two lads who came last on the roll, to keep him young, and, when schooldays arrived, his ingenuity was kept constantly on the stretch for excuses to rush down from London to Eton and spend an afternoon with them.³ There is

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 123.

² 'When I was last in England,' the same American Bishop wrote to Mrs. Wilberforce in 1907, 'no Bishop of the Anglican Communion treated me with more consideration and gracious hospitality. His picture, with his wife and children grouped round him, and each named in his own handwriting, hangs in my study in far-away Texas, and I have gazed upon it an hundred times as symbolising my ideal of an episcopal home in the old Mother Country.'

³ Shortly after the Bishop's death a letter to one of his clergy was published in a local paper which throws a touching light on the happiness which he found in the society of his children. 'You are just about to start on your holiday in Wales, so I hear, and alone. Do me the favour to accept the enclosed (a £5 note) and take one of your boys with you. It will do you more good.'

before me, as I write, a packet of letters to his daughters, too intimate for quotation, but breathing on every page the air of fondest affection, of close understanding, of interests shared in common. The letter I have already quoted from his eldest boy ¹ shows the terms of comradeship existing between father and son; and it wrung the Bishop to the heart when the latter sailed for South Africa at a critical stage in the Boer War. The load of anxiety was not lessened by the news from the front. On June 4, 1901, his regiment (Paget's Horse) was involved in a fierce rear-guard action at Braklaagte. Several of the officers were killed, and on the list of those dangerously wounded was the name of 'Trooper Wilberforce.' He had been moved with his comrades to the rear, when a rush on the part of the enemy caused a hasty retreat and the temporary abandonment of the wounded.

No sooner had our men left the hill (he wrote to his mother) than about twenty Boers dashed up, and a more heterogeneous collection of scoundrels I have never seen. They came up to us and proceeded to strip us of everything we had. They then went round the other side of the hill to windward, and lit a veldt fire, with the double object of covering their own retreat and burning us out; and we lay and watched the fire approaching us with a roar, with the cheering prospect in our minds of being roasted alive in a few minutes' time; but just at the right moment, when the fire had got within forty yards of us, a troop of our men dashed through it, and carried us to a place of safety beyond.

Roland Wilberforce made an excellent recovery, and received a commission in the Royal Sussex regiment. The same summer which brought so much anxiety to the Palace at Chichester was brightened by the marriage in the Cathedral of the Bishop's eldest daughter to the

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 206.

Rev. Edward Russell Walker, a son of the late Archdeacon of Chichester. The union was destined to be tragically short, for the seeds of a fatal illness were developed in the bridegroom within a few months of the wedding-day, and he died in October of the following year, to the inexpressible grief of all who knew him. It was the first and only sorrow that reached the Bishop through his children. His other two daughters,¹ it should be added, were both married in his lifetime, both from his own Cathedral, and here no shadow fell to cloud the happiness of the father and mother.

In telling the story of a Bishop's life one is apt to dwell too exclusively on his troubles and difficulties ; to dilate upon the lions in the path rather than the sojourn in the House Beautiful. Ernest Wilberforce found his relief from recalcitrant priests and perfervid agitators, from the glare of platforms and the rarefied atmosphere of committee rooms, in the busy routine of diocesan work. And down to the end he was constantly on the watch for some new means of bringing light into dark places, of bettering the lot of those around him, of cheering his fellow-workers in the Great Cause. For instance, an intimate knowledge of two dioceses had taught him something of the especial trials and troubles of the wives of the clergy, and of their needs in matters spiritual. It had struck both him and Mrs. Wilberforce that the rigid, silent 'quiet days' and 'retreats' which were devised for them were apt to impose too great a strain on women whose most pressing need probably was relaxation. Accordingly in May 1907 the wives of the clergy of the archdeaconry of

¹ Now respectively the wives of Edward Cornwall Lee and Henry Arden Franklyn. One of the Bishop's last public appearances was on the occasion of his christening the little daughter of the latter in July 1907 at the parish church of Shedfield.

Chichester were invited to spend a couple of nights among friends in the cathedral city, as many as possible being accommodated in the Palace, and to attend a series of devotional addresses in the Chapel there, but to pass the rest of the time in the house and garden on the footing of welcome visitors. The Bishop gave the address at Evensong the first night, and Canon Holmes, now Archdeacon of London, took those on the following day. How much the innovation was appreciated will appear in the following letter from a lady who was one of the guests.

MY DEAR MRS. WILBERFORCE,—I am afraid you will be overwhelmed with letters of thanks, but I really cannot help writing a few lines to tell you how much I felt your great kindness. It is not only how much you do for us, but the way you do it, that touches our hearts. To give us the opportunity of so much spiritual help was the greatest boon, and when to that was added the kindness and attention we all received, and the bright example of careful management and thought, all in tune with your beautiful ‘Garden of Peace,’ with the Cathedral spire leading us upwards. I can assure you that for myself at all events your happy day has sent me home much refreshed and strengthened for my daily tasks. I only hope that you may not suffer yourself or be over-tired.

With ever grateful thanks,

Yours most sincerely,

The Bishop had intended to make these gatherings a permanent institution, and to embrace in them the whole of his diocese, but he never lived to arrange another.

One of his main burdens, and one to which allusion has already been made, was his correspondence. Whether arising out of ordinary administrative work,

or out of difficulties such as those described in former chapters of this book, it seemed to become increasingly oppressive. The Bishop, as has been said, made a point of answering every letter personally, or at least of preparing the draft in his own handwriting. He once told Canon Deane that he had written sixty-three letters that day and directed all the envelopes himself. The letters he received on all important diocesan matters were carefully docketed and preserved, with the draft answers written when practicable on the fly-leaf. The physical toil involved must have been prodigious. The handful of 'extreme' clergy at Brighton and elsewhere would alone have been justification for a secretary, had he ever allowed himself that luxury, and one wonders if they fully grasped what they cost their Bishop in sheer manual labour. But besides matters of public interest there were others, purely personal or confidential, which drew from him an almost endless series of letters, addressed not merely to the principals, but to all concerned. In one instance, where a clergyman taking temporary work in the diocese had shown a deplorable laxity in his dealings with charitable funds, I have counted over forty letters, divided between some nine or ten individuals, some of whom had only the remotest connection with the case. Add to these the busybodies who sought to instruct him in his duties, or to keep him posted in parish gossip, and the stirrers-up of strife whose apparently innocent inquiries were intended to land him in some controversial quagmire. The Bishop was not a promising subject for these latter gentry, and he seldom answered a letter from an unknown quarter without inquiry as to the antecedents and *bona fides* of his correspondent. Here again was fresh labour, necessary in a sense, but most wantonly

imposed. And Time, the enemy, was beginning to run against him. A certain ecclesiastical appointment was being severely criticised one morning by some of the party assembled round the breakfast-table at the Palace. 'The only redeeming feature about him,' said one of the guests, 'is that he's nearly seventy.' 'Yes,' broke in the Bishop, 'that's just what you young fellows will be saying about me in a year or two.' But the Bishop was not destined to attain unto the three-score years and ten of the Psalmist. The machine was beginning to wear out, and in spite of warnings he stuck tenaciously to his old habits both in labour and recreation. Nothing could induce him to 'slacken off,' and the violent exercise on foot or on his bicycle which had once been the source of strength and vigour was now a strain on heart and limbs which he could not be brought to recognise.

In the summer of 1902, as he was starting for England after his Norway holiday at Olden, the bursting of a small vein behind the eye reduced him suddenly to almost complete blindness. Unluckily he was making the return journey alone, and the pencilled scrap in his memorandum book is a pathetic cry from the heart of one who seldom gave way to weakness. 'Couldn't read a word or write—darkness and dancing letters—reached Bergen at 2—had an awful time—not a soul to speak to—oh to have my darling wife here, what joy it would be!' The next day he was a little better,— 'Can stroll about and see enough for that, but the awful loneliness—can just see to write this, it will explain if anything worse happens before I get home. If this is permanent and I live I must resign. Won't give in if I can help it; but to be blind!' The recovery, though gradual, was complete; but the process of

convalescence was not accelerated by an alarming carriage accident. As he was coming back with Mrs. Wilberforce from the consecration of a new church at Rumboldswyck, the horses 'bolted' in the streets of Chichester; the coachman was thrown from the box, and both the Bishop and his wife were in imminent danger. Fortunately the carriage was stopped just opposite Canon Lane, with no worse consequences than a shock to the occupants.

In September 1905 a much more serious illness filled those about him with the gravest apprehensions; it was, indeed, a precursor of the fatal attack which ended his life two years later. At one moment resignation seemed inevitable; then the appointment of a suffragan was suggested; failing that Bishop Welldon generously offered to take over the duties of the diocese for three months. But as he regained strength Ernest Wilberforce rejected the proposals for assistance,¹ and staggered back to the work for which he was painfully and manifestly unfit. Insomnia and deep depression were part of his punishment.

It will be pleasanter dining here (he writes to Mrs. Wilberforce from the house of a married daughter) than at the club, and I shall go to the Basils soon after nine, and ask to be allowed to have my small smoke, and then go to bed, and struggle for the sleep which is so hard to win. I miss my darling more than I can say, and what she is to me no man can tell! So brave, so patient with me in my misery and downheartedness. Thank you a thousand times, my darling.

And if I raise here for a moment, and only for a moment, the veil which screens the sacred love of

¹ The Right Rev. C. J. Corfe, formerly Bishop of Corea.

husband and wife, it is to throw a flash of light on the inner side of a married life unsurpassed in happiness and unbounded in affection. The Bishop and Mrs. Wilberforce were lovers to the last, and in the hours of pain and ill-health and depression the strong, self-contained man came to lean more and more on her who had been ever his helpmeet and trusted counsellor in great things and in small. Nor am I permitted to make more than a passing allusion to the devotion with which Mrs. Wilberforce identified herself with her husband's labours, to the rare common-sense and capacity for organisation which she brought to bear on her self-appointed tasks, whether at home within the Palace or in the wider sphere of women's work throughout the diocese.

Those of the clergy who were most in his confidence were deeply concerned at the Bishop's condition; and in November 1905, at the conclusion of the annual ruri-decanal conference, he was the recipient of a very unusual round robin.

We, the Archdeacons and Rural Deans of your Lordship's Diocese (so it ran), whose names are hereunto appended, desire unanimously to make request to you under the following circumstances:—Mindful of the most valuable work which your Lordship has been carrying on amongst us, during the ten years that you have been our Bishop; and in order that, in the good Providence of God, it may be continued to this Diocese for yet many years to come; We hereby most respectfully, and—permit us to add—affectionately, entreat your Lordship, as soon as may be after Christmas, to take a prolonged rest of at least two months—apart from all Diocesan calls and worries—that so—God grant it—your health may be entirely restored, and yourself be able to resume your duties with comfort to yourself and to those who are near and dear to you—to the

glory of God, and to the benefit of all the souls in the Diocese, whom so lovingly and faithfully you bear upon your heart.

Then follow the signatures of the Ven. Robert Sutton,¹ Archdeacon of Lewes, of the Rev. Edward L. Elwes, Archdeacon of Chichester, and of the twenty-two rural deans.

The kindly advice was acted upon in part, but unless a Bishop puts the broad seas between his diocese and himself, it is impossible to escape the cares and worries of his office. The year 1906 saw no diminution in the Bishop's activities. The Diocesan Conference, the last he was to preside over, was held at Lewes in October 1906, and the Bishop spoke with all his old directness and vigour. The Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline had published its report and evidence since the Chichester Conference in 1905, and he dwelt with peculiar satisfaction on its strong recommendation in favour of a reform of the Court of Final Appeal in matters ecclesiastical, believing as he did 'that such measures as are recommended will do much to restore that peace to the Church of God which we all earnestly long and pray for.' An allusion by one of the speakers to his own evidence and to the firm stand he had taken on behalf of his clergy, 'his erring sons,' was received with the heartiest demonstrations of approval.

¹ A letter from Archdeacon Sutton to Mrs. Wilberforce, written after a similar gathering a year or two earlier, gives a pleasant glimpse of the relations between the Bishop and those upon whom he depended so largely for the administration of his diocese. 'You would have been amused if you had been in the study when his Lordship had said his last words in closing our Conference before he gave the Blessing. On my interfering and asking permission to say something' (presumably a vote of thanks) 'he stopped me, so I said to all the others "You know what I was going to say—those of you who are in favour of what I was going to say hold up your hands"; and they all did of course. So without a speech, I carried my motion unanimously.'

In May of the following year he was sorely grieved by the death of Bishop Lloyd. Something has been said on a former page¹ of the intimate and affectionate ties which had bound together from their earliest years the first and the third Bishops of Newcastle. And none realised better than Ernest Wilberforce how heavy was the blow that had fallen on the Church in Northumberland. He took the funeral service in the churchyard at Benwell, and, in God's providence, this melancholy visit north gave him the opportunity of what was to be a last greeting with many of the fellow-workers from whom he had long been separated. 'I was on the platform at Newcastle station,' wrote a country parson to Mrs. Wilberforce, 'when a strong hand was laid on my shoulder, and I heard in the well-remembered tones "Do you forget your old friends?"'

Those who saw him then and during the next two months detected in him no sign of illness or of failing power, but he was longing for his holiday, and the first week in August had been fixed as usual for his departure to Norway. The last Sunday in his diocese was spent in a quiet country parish on the Downs. He had learnt that the incumbent was badly in need of a rest, and he insisted on taking the whole duty himself, declaring that he would inhibit his friend if he found him in the Rectory on that day. There he celebrated the Holy Eucharist for the last time, and preached morning and evening; the text of his last sermon was from the 32nd verse of the 22nd chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel: 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.'

Between the services he wrote the following letter to his brother Reginald.

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 117.

Singleton Rectory,
Chichester.
August 4, 1907.

MY DEAREST REG.,—I am here for the day, taking a parson's duty for him to give him a holiday, and got your letter just before leaving home this morning. Yes, I am starting from Hull on Tuesday, with Victor,¹ Kitty² and her husband, and am going to the Hardanger fiord, for trouting and sea-fishing, and shall probably move about a little, and return on August 24 from Bergen, and then go to Bembridge in the Isle of Wight, where we have taken a house, and get some boating, till towards the end of the holidays, when the boys go back to school. I went to see Mitchell Bruce the other day, as I hadn't paid him a visit since April in last year; he said my heart was no worse. I saw old Smith on Friday.³ I rode over and came back from Petworth by train; the old boy was looking well; he will be 89 on September 5th. Love to you all; ever your loving brother,

ERNEST R. CICESTR.

The programme was faithfully carried out, and Norway seemed to work its wonted charm on wearied frame and spirit. But the *El Dorado* had scarcely left Bergen on the homeward voyage when he was suddenly taken ill, and the two medical men, Dr. Saunders and Dr. King Martyn, who happened to be on board pronounced him to be in a grave condition of heart failure. There was a little hesitancy of speech, a slight confusion of ideas, which gave further cause for alarm. 'He was so patient, so grateful for the little we were able to do for him,' wrote Dr. Martyn afterwards to Archdeacon Wilberforce; 'he seemed to me to have such a very great personal charm. I shouldn't think that a man like him could ever have had a single enemy.'

¹ His second son.

² His second daughter, Mrs. Edward Lee.

³ *Vide supra*, p. 6.

The pain and distress grew much easier as the vessel drew near the English coast; and when Hull was reached on August 25 he was sufficiently recovered to write a few lines to one of his humble Norwegian friends,¹ from the Station Hotel. There Mrs. Wilberforce was in waiting, and she brought him up to London to the house of his daughter, Mrs. Lee. 'Your mother is with me,' he wrote to his eldest son, 'and now I know I shall get well.' He was very weak and ailing, but his doctor saw no cause for immediate alarm; Mrs. Wilberforce went down to Bembridge, whither he followed her the next day under the care of Mrs. Lee. He bore the journey well; but on Friday, September 6, he kept his bed till the afternoon, and on attempting to get up he had another, and this time a fatal, seizure—one of the little blood-vessels in the brain had broken. He never completely recovered consciousness, and passed away, peacefully and painlessly, in the early morning of Monday, September 9. All his children save his eldest son, who was with his regiment in India, had been gathered round him before the end came. 'Thus,' in the words of one who loved him dearly,² 'he wore himself out of this world to do the will of God unhampered in the life of the world to come, where may God of His mercy grant him joy and peace and rest.'

On the following Thursday the body was taken to the mainland from that little island within whose confines the Bishop had been born, had been married, and had died. By the thoughtful kindness of H.R.H. Princess Henry of Battenberg, the Governor of the Isle of Wight, the special service vessel, H.M.S. *Magnet*, bore the coffin and the mourners across the Solent. Her ensign flew at half-mast, and the men-of-war in

¹ Anders Rrynestad; *vide supra*, p. 312*n*. ² The Rev. H. M. Hordern.

Portsmouth harbour paid the same sad tribute of respect. Ernest Wilberforce had loved the sea with a passionate devotion, and to be a sailor was ever a passport to his friendship. No fitter end to his journeyings could have been devised. At Chichester the sorrowing party were met by the Dean and the Cathedral clergy, and the coffin was reverently escorted through the hushed streets to the Palace chapel. The interment was fixed for Saturday, the 14th, and the Bishop's last resting-place on earth was chosen in the secluded churchyard of Westhampnett, some two miles distant from Chichester. The day was observed in the cathedral city as one of general mourning; and at two o'clock, the time fixed for the funeral, the shops were closed and the blinds drawn down in the houses. The Cathedral was filled with an enormous crowd, drawn from all parts of the diocese, and swelled by grieving friends from London and from distant parts of the kingdom. The faithful laity, women and men alike, had come from every corner of Sussex to pay the last tribute of affection and respect to him who had been indeed the Shepherd and the Bishop of their souls. Over 200 clergy in robes walked in procession, with the Dean, the Archdeacons, and the Canons at their head. The Mayors of five other Sussex towns besides Chichester itself attended in the insignia of their office. Immediately behind the coffin walked Canon Edgar Sheppard, Sub-dean of the Chapel Royal, as representing King Edward, who had been one of the first to telegraph a message of sympathy in the loss of one whom he had known long and had held in high esteem. And behind the Sub-dean came the widow, leaning on the arms of her two school-boy sons, Victor and William, their father's friends and playmates. It was a beautiful September afternoon,

and within the Cathedral there were none of the dark accessories of woe. Violet is the Church's mourning colour, and violet curtains were drawn before the Bishop's throne; a violet cloth was over his chair on the north side of the high altar, and the high altar itself had a violet-and-white embroidered frontal. There was no pall upon the coffin, but over it fell in graceful folds the purple and white robe of the Garter, which Bishop Samuel Wilberforce was wont to wear as Prelate of that Order, and which had served a similar office at the funeral in Lavington Church four and thirty years before. The hymns selected by Mrs. Wilberforce were those which her husband had loved above all others: 'There is a blessed Home,'¹ and 'Ten thousand times ten thousand'; and through them rang the note of joy and triumph and Christian hope. The lesson was read by the aged Bishop of Lincoln, one of the very few among that vast congregation whose memory of Ernest Wilberforce went back to the far-off Cuddesdon days. The procession re-formed; and while the solemn notes of the Dead March in 'Saul' rolled out through the Cathedral, the coffin was borne down to the west door, and as the congregation dispersed the bells of the Cathedral rang a muffled peal. At the entrance to Westhampnett churchyard the body was met by the Bishops of Salisbury and Peterborough, who shared between them the concluding portion of the Burial Service. And there the body of Ernest Roland Wilberforce, twenty-five years a Bishop in the Church of God,² was laid to rest.

On the day after the Bishop's death an obituary

¹ This was the hymn that had been sung in the Palace Chapel the last time the family were gathered together there, on the morning he started for his holiday.

² From the inscription on the coffin.

article had appeared in the *Times*, which, in the judgment of those who knew him best, gave a misleading and imperfect account both of the man and of his work. It elicited more than one protest, and I think that the following letter, published in that paper on the morning of the Bishop's funeral, and signed 'A Country Parson,' is at once a stirring vindication and a transparently truthful testimony.

Of his devotion to his home, and all that makes home sacred, we must be silent. Of his work in Newcastle we cannot speak from personal knowledge—but those warm-hearted people loved him and speak of him still as 'Our Bishop.' But we in this diocese of Chichester have seen his untiring energy in discharging single-handed the ordinary duties of his large and too unwieldy diocese. We have watched his perseverance and success in championing unpopular causes among a people whose enthusiasm is hard to stir. We have known his English love of fair play and hatred of all that is mean and untrue, his sympathy with men of widely divergent views, so long as they were working for their Master, and his impatience of idleness and party strife. His loyalty to his clergy and his respect and affection for those who differed from him made him suffer much himself to spare them suffering. He was a firm friend, and did not forget old servants. His last Sunday in his diocese was spent alone in a country parish, that the rector might take a holiday. And we who remember those things and his acts of generosity (so consistently done in secret) feel that with a more intimate knowledge of his character the writer of your article would have formed a different estimate of his episcopate. It would be difficult to find any instructed person who is not sometimes a little 'vague in his ideas of what is and what is not legal'—for so much depends upon what is meant by 'legal.' It is not given to everyone to be 'affable in social intercourse'; but dignity and courtesy are surely higher gifts. Does it

matter so much if a Bishop is a 'very poor ritualist,'¹ and has no very profound knowledge of Church law? Bishop Wilberforce devoted his energies to weightier matters—to the education of the children in the Catholic faith, to the preaching of the Gospel to simple folk in country churches, to speaking plain and manly words to men, and moving and encouraging, by his earnest and affectionate addresses, the hearts of the boys and girls on whom he laid hands in Confirmation. And it is by those things that he will long be lovingly remembered by the people of Sussex as their Father-in-God.

It would be easy to emphasise these words from the letters which, for days and weeks after the Bishop's death, poured in upon his wife and children. They came from all classes: from the great territorial magnates, including the Duke of Norfolk, the recognised head in matters secular of the English Roman Catholic community; from the members of the Chapter; from the country clergy and their wives; from the stubborn priests who had hurt him so sorely; from the Church societies and benevolent institutions; from the vigorous laymen who had been the backbone of Church work in so many parishes; from humble toilers who knew him only on the platform or in the pulpit. All wrote under strong emotion, under a sense of loss personal to themselves and to the diocese at large.

It is difficult and invidious to select, but I venture to offer three—from the Ven. T. T. Churton, now Archdeacon of Lewes, and for many years examining chaplain to Ernest Wilberforce; from the late Primate of Ireland;² and from the present Dean of Westminster, then Bishop of Winchester.³ Commentary would be impertinent,

¹ The words used of himself by the Bishop in his evidence before the Royal Commission.

² The Right Rev. William Alexander.

³ The Right Rev. Herbert Ryle.

but each of them is at once corroborative and complementary of the others.

Bexhill Rectory,
Sussex.

October 18, 1907.

MY DEAR MRS. WILBERFORCE,—I ought to have written long before this to thank you for your kindness in writing, and indeed I had hoped that you would not trouble to write, for it was partly because I wanted to save you at least one letter to answer that I sent a telegram instead of a letter when the sorrowful tidings reached us.

And I must also thank you for the letter that you sent the Secretary of our Sidley Working Men's Club. I cannot tell you how much the men appreciated and were touched by your kindness in writing as you did.

It must be, and I hope will be more and more, a comfort to you, in the midst of the sorrowful sense of desolation, to realise how our dear Bishop had won the universal respect and love of his entire diocese. I think you would be cheered to hear how our loss is spoken of here in Bexhill on every hand. And for myself I can truly say that I shall thank God as long as I live that I came to know him so well, with an ever-deepening sense of reverence and affection. I did not know till now how much I loved him.

We can never hope in this diocese to listen to such perfect Confirmation Addresses as his. It made no difference whether he was speaking to a few poor girls in the little chapel of the Halton Penitentiary, or to a little gathering of village boys and girls at Icklesham, or to our Bexhill candidates, many of them educated children from our many schools; it was always the same: he arrested and held their attention, and spoke to them as though he knew (as indeed I believe he *did* know, by God's grace) the circumstances and temptations of each, encouraging as well as warning them in words which are bearing lasting fruit.

Well, thank God, he is taken from us 'in presence, not in heart'; and though we cannot define 'the Communion of Saints,' yet I am sure that in some wonderful but most real way they are given back to us, even here and now, and we are helped to be brave and 'stablished in every good word and work.'

With Mrs. Churton's love,

Yours most sincerely,

T. T. CHURTON.

The Palace,
Armagh.

September 15, 1907.

MY DEAR MRS. WILBERFORCE,—You may not remember much, but probably remember something of an Irish Bishop of Derry who used from time to time to spend a few days with you at Benwell Tower.

I have often since thought of those delightful days. Your dear husband was surely touched with the *beauty* of holiness. His character with its truth and attractive grace was surely the creation of Christ. He seemed to me always what I longed to be but never was. Surely when Christ appears, your Bishop shall be like Him. If he appeared in this light to a comparative stranger, what must he have been to you? That God may bless and comfort you and your children is the prayer of, my dear Mrs. Wilberforce, yours, with affectionate remembrance,

WILLIAM ARMAGH.

Royal Crescent Hotel,
Filey.

September 11, 1907.

MY DEAR MRS. WILBERFORCE,—Let me send a line of keenest sympathy in your trouble. The suddenness of the blow has been terrible; God give you strength and courage to bear it!

For the Church it is a grievous loss, to be deprived of the sympathy, fearlessness, and force which were his!

He was to me ever the kindest and most brotherly of friends ever since I became a bishop. We have sat next one another at Convocation for over four years ; and I have felt it a privilege to be brought so closely in touch with the brightness, unfailing courtesy and sweetness, and trusty downrightness of his loving nature.

Our thoughts will be with you, and our prayers for you and yours at this sad time.

I am
Yours ever,
HERBERT E. WINTON.

Please, no answer.

On the Sunday following the Bishop's death the morning sermon in Chichester Cathedral was preached by Canon Gough, the Vicar of Newcastle. He chose for his text the 15th verse of the 4th chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians : ' Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many Fathers.'

The State (he said) can appoint a man to this or that see. The Church can consecrate him to the Episcopal Office. Education and training may make him a good ' instructor.' But only Divine grace in the man's heart can make him ' a Father-in-God ' to his people . . . and true fatherhood does not consist in kindness and tenderness only ; one cannot dissociate it from the further idea of discipline, and Bishop Wilberforce was a disciplinarian. He could be stern, and it was a sternness which few would willingly incur. If there were two things more than any other that he could not stand, they were the shirking of work and responsibility, and the inclination to take serious things otherwise than seriously. And this grew, I think, out of a strong characteristic of his own. Few men could more completely relax in times of holiday or leisure, because few men worked harder or more conscientiously in time of duty. To be by him summoned to any post

or task, however hard or anxious, was either to undertake it, or to despise yourself for ever afterwards. One felt at once that one had no choice; you knew that his respect—one of the treasures of your life—was in danger if you refused. And in matters more distinctly disciplinary, Bishop Wilberforce was, I venture to think, strong with the strength of a kindly and generous heart. One with whom I had some conversation some time ago, with whose methods the Bishop was not always in complete agreement, said to me: ‘But the Bishop is always so just.’ If he did not agree with you, he said so fearlessly; if he thought you wrong, he told you so in plain words. The real fact is that he was too strong to be the Bishop of a party; too sure of his own position to be incapable of measuring and appreciating the conscientious position of others. It was strength, not weakness, that enabled him to hold the balance of conflicting parties with so true and sure a hand. Those who have served under him as rural deans will sometimes have come to know the keen pain he felt when he had to deal, as every Bishop sometimes must, with cases of real wrong-doing; the firmness, tempered with a gentleness that leaned always to the merciful side, and ever the deep personal grief which such matters caused his own feeling heart—the father bearing the infirmities of his spiritual sons.

A few months later the formal testimony of the Bishop’s episcopal brethren of the southern province was communicated to Mrs. Wilberforce by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Ample and most cordial recognition (he wrote from Lambeth on February 9, 1908) was borne in our Convocation debates during this last week to our universal sense of the loss the Bishops have sustained in your dear husband’s departure from among us.

One Bishop after another testified to the strength of our affection and respect for him. The newspaper reports which I have seen do not, of necessity, record

all that was said, and I undertook to be the medium of conveying to you, together with our deep sympathy, an expression both corporate and personal of the value we have always attached to his counsel and action as a member of our body.

With every highest and best wish, and with our united kindest regards,

I remain,
Very truly yours,
RANDALL CANTUAR.

The Archbishop's own speech, as recorded in the official 'Chronicles of Convocation,' ran as follows :—

The President said that he should esteem it a privilege to be allowed to convey to the family of Bishop Wilberforce the expressions which had been given that day of the sense of the loss which the House had sustained. He believed that people who did not know the late Bishop well had hardly comprehended what a really remarkable man he was in many ways. There was that stamp of affectionateness which lay upon his life, and which had been referred to by more than one speaker. It was certainly very marked in his own most intimate family circle, and it was extended still more widely, and characterised, as it seemed to him (the President), both his administrative work and his public utterances. As to his public utterances, he thought that those who only knew the Bishop in later years had hardly realised what an extraordinary power of public and effective speech for good and God there was in the real orations and speeches which belonged to his earlier years. He inherited in no small degree the gift of his father and his grandfather, as the Bishop of Lincoln had said, and the power of expressing himself in a manner which would take hold upon the mind of his hearers. He could remember being most deeply stirred more than twenty years ago by speeches which the Bishop made, in one case on the subject of Purity, and in another case on the

subject of Temperance. Simply as a Christian orator, permeated with real Christian enthusiasm, he was a truly remarkable man. He (the President) happened to have had ample opportunities of knowing the power of affectionate sympathy which he showed, on the one hand, and the power to speak effectively and tellingly, on the other, in his Confirmation addresses. Those two things together made him quite exceptionally strong in that most important branch of his work.

In the north choir aisle of Newcastle Cathedral, just beyond the monument to Bishop Lloyd, there was unveiled by the Duke of Northumberland in October 1910 an engraved tablet of brass inlaid in a slab of marble, and representing Ernest Wilberforce in his full height, crosier in hand, and clad in his episcopal robes. The simplest of inscriptions records his years of office in Newcastle and Chichester, and the date of his entering into rest, with the words, taken from the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, iii. 10, 'A Wise Master-BUILDER.'¹

Though he died Bishop of another diocese, and though his body lies far away in the hollow of the Sussex Downs, the Churchmen of Northumberland were bent on possessing in their own Cathedral a visible memorial to one who had toiled for fourteen laborious years in their midst, who had spent himself in breathing life into the old Northumbrian see, and in winning back to the Church of England a territory that had been wellnigh lost. It is as the first Bishop of Newcastle that he will be best remembered in the history of the Church of England, as the wise Master-BUILDER who laid the foundations so deep, and planned the structure so truly and

¹ Twelve months earlier a coloured marble bas-relief, depicting him on his knees before a faldstool, had been placed in Chichester Cathedral. The unveiling ceremony was performed by Lord Brassey; the surplus of the Memorial Fund was devoted to a scheme for assisting ordination candidates in which the Bishop had been greatly interested.

so surely. But whether in Newcastle or in Chichester, in the slums of Portsea or on the South African veldt, the keynote of his life was the same, a burning love for his Master and Saviour, a fierce desire to win souls to Christ. I cannot close this book better than by an extract from a letter written by his brother Basil, when the text to be placed on the cross erected to his memory at West-hampnett was under discussion.

His religion was of the definite and practical, and not at all of the emotional and visionary kind. The text I should like for him would be Daniel xii. 3 (with the justifiable concentration of the sentence): *'They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.'* He turned many to righteousness through his ministry, and it is well that we should claim for him God's promise.

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